

KING
V'S
GURKHA
REGIMENT

THE HISTORY OF
THE 1ST KING GEORGE V'S
OWN GURKHA RIFLES
(THE MALAUN REGIMENT)



VOLUME II: 1920-1947

BY

BRIGADIER E. V. R. BELLERS

WITH A FOREWORD BY

GENERAL SIR DOUGLAS D. GRACEY

K.C.B., K.C.I.E., C.B.E., M.C.



COLONEL H. M. D. SHAW, D.S.O.
Colonel of the Regiment, 1944–48
President, Regimental Association (U.K.), 1948–54

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**IN MEMORY OF
THE GALLANT DEAD
OF
THE FIRST GURKHAS, 1920-1946
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
TO
ALL PRESENT AND FUTURE RANKS
OF THE REGIMENT**

NORTH-WEST FRONTIER, INDIA
1920-21, 1931, 1935, 1938-39

North Malaya:

JITRA GURUN

Central Malaya:

KAMPAR SLIM RIVER JOHORE

SINGAPORE ISLAND

North Arakan:

BUTHIDAUNG

Imphal:

TAMU ROAD SHENAM PASS BISHENPUR UKHRUL

Kohima:

JAIL HILL NAGA VILLAGE

Reconquest of Burma:

MANDALAY : MYITSON MYN MU BRIDGEHEAD KYAUKSE, 1945

MEIKTILA : NYAUNGU BRIDGEHEAD TAUNGTHA MYINGYAN

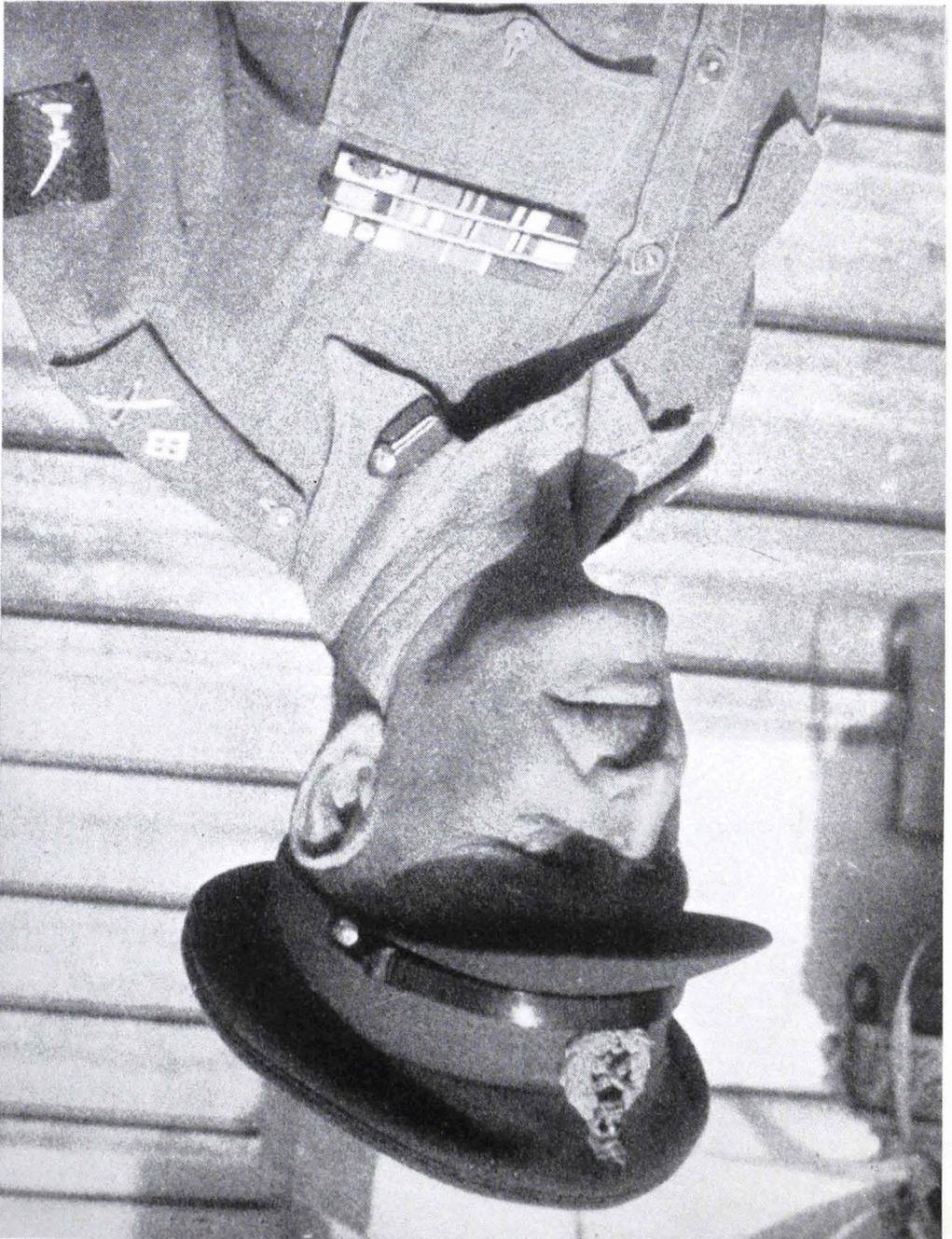
THE IRRAWADDY : MT. POPA YENANGYAUNG, 1945

MAGWE KAMA (ZALON)

SITTANG, 1945

SOUTH-EAST ASIA, 1945-46

GENERAL SIR DOUGLAS D. GRACEY, K.C.B., K.C.I.E., C.B.E., M.C.
Commander, 20th Indian Division, 1942-46, and of
Allied Military Mission to French Indo-China, 1945-46
Chief of Staff, Pakistan Army, 1947-48
Commander-in-Chief, Pakistan Army, 1948-51
President, Regimental Association (U.K.), 1954



FOREWORD

BY

GENERAL SIR DOUGLAS D. GRACEY, K.C.B.,
K.C.I.E., C.B.E., M.C.

I FEEL it a great honour to have been asked to write the Foreword for this volume of the History of the Regiment, which covers such a vital period of its life—from 1920 to 1947—when the whole Regiment, in peace and war, in triumph and disaster, earned a reputation second to none.

During the period between the two World Wars the efficiency, discipline and cheerful acceptance of the many difficulties with which the 1st and 2nd Battalions were faced, on the North-West Frontier and on civil-defence duties, formed a fine foundation on which to build the expanded Regiment of the Second World War with its five Battalions.

The Regiment had a magnificent war record. I know at first hand how fine were the achievements of the 1st, 3rd and 4th Battalions. The 1st Battalion served in my Division, the 20th Indian, for over a year in Southern Burma and in Indo-China; the 3rd Battalion joined the Division in 1943 at Ranchi, was in the thick of the fighting at Imphal, the Irrawaddy battles, and during the advance towards Rangoon, and did a fine job of work in an unpleasant situation in Indo-China before going off to a much needed rest in the Celebes; and the 4th Battalion, who were actually under my command for a short time during the fighting north of Prome in 1944, were always near neighbours in the 7th Division—at Kohima, at Ukhrul and on the northern flank of the advance to Meiktila.

After reading the chapters on the superlative courage and unrelenting spirit of all ranks of the 2nd Battalion during the fighting in Malaya in 1941–42 and during their captivity after the fall of Singapore, past, present and future officers will feel as honoured as I was to have been, or to be, a member of a Regiment which produced such warriors as they were.

It may seem invidious to mention names when so many distinguished themselves, but I am certain that all ranks of the Regiment would like specially to honour Lieutenant-Colonel John

Fulton ("Daddy"), commanding the 2nd Battalion, and Lieutenant-Colonel C. M. H. Wingfield, D.S.O., M.V.O. ("Sammy"), commanding the 3rd Battalion, whose battalions fought so magnificently under their command. Both were killed in action to the great sorrow of all ranks of the Regiment, but they have left behind shining and unrivalled examples of inspired leadership and stark heroism which were, and ever will be, an inspiration to us all.

To Brigadier E. V. R. Bellers ("Bill"), who has given up so much of his time to write this volume of the History, we owe a very great debt of gratitude. Everyone will realize what an immense amount of hard work, thought, research and letter-writing this has entailed, and will agree with me that he has produced a stirring, interesting and factual book. I thank him most sincerely on behalf of all of us for this labour of love, and congratulate him on a great achievement.

We thank also Colonel H. M. D. Shaw, D.S.O., the President of the Regimental Association from 1948 to 1954, and Colonel N. M. Macleod ("Sandy"), the Secretary and Treasurer of the Association from 1948, and still serving as such, who have both been responsible for the financial arrangements and hard work in the background, without which we would not have had this book at all.

Captains John B. Peters and Bryan D. G. Berry between them drew the maps and sketches, and we are grateful to them for their first-class draughtsmanship, as we are to the Imperial War Museum for providing us with a large number of photographs of which a small selection has been produced.

Finally, I am sure that all old Officers, Gurkha Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Riflemen of the 1st K.G.V's O. Gurkha Rifles would like me to pass on this record of part of the grand tradition of the Regiment to our successors in the 1st Gorkha Rifles with our very best wishes and our certain assurance that they and the generations who succeed them will be as inspired by it as we have been.

Douglas Huxley

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(Maps by JOHN PETERS (J. P.) and BRYAN BERRY (B. B.).)

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE preparation of this History has taken much longer than I expected. There were many gaps in the records available at home, and it was only after lengthy research that I was able to tackle the narrative itself.

I owe much to the successive Commandants, and the Staff, of the Regimental Centre, and later of the combined 14 Gorkha Training Centre, for the records they provided and for the statistical information which they patiently extracted for me. We are all indebted to the present Regiment as a whole for their generous contribution towards the cost of producing this volume.

I have tried to resist an old soldier's temptation to enlarge on the "good old days" of the twenty inter-war years and have compressed these into three chapters to allow more space for the eight epic years which followed. But I have allowed the "Frontier forays," and in particular the Waziristan "war" of 1938-39, to claim considerable space. The latter involved both Regular Battalions and the conditions were repeated for all in turn, except the 2nd Battalion, up to the end of 1947. I believe the Regiment's share in this almost forgotten era of North-West Frontier Defence deserves to be told in full.

I have also devoted much space to the story of the 2nd Battalion in Malaya and in captivity because its misfortunes were long wrapped in mystery and misrepresentation. The mistakes and muddles of the Malaya campaign were certainly not on the Battalion level and its share in the gallant 11th Indian Division's record can now speak for itself.

My personal knowledge of events ended in 1940, and thereafter I have relied on those who made this History and wrote their versions of it. I regret that I have had to condense so much of their graphic material and have not found space for many worthy incidents.

I am greatly indebted to the following for their help with diaries, letters or advice :

1ST BATTALION : Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Jarvis;

2ND BATTALION : Lieutenant-Colonels E. C. Mockler (inter-war) and W. J. Winkfield; Majors N. P. G. O'Neal and C. G. Wylie (Malaya and captivity);

3RD BATTALION : Lieutenant-Colonels H. G. J. Purcell and C. M. Dodkins, D.S.O.; Majors L. C. Dean, M.B.E., M.C., and C. U. Blascheck, M.C.;

4TH BATTALION : Lieutenant-Colonel C. H. D. Berthon and his History team, including Captain R. P. N. Green; and Lieutenant-Colonel D. G. T. Horsford, D.S.O.;

5TH BATTALION : Lieutenant-Colonel J. L. F. O'Ferrall;

REGIMENTAL CENTRE : Colonels N. M. Macleod and F. M. W. Crooke, M.M., and Captain A. P. Coleman.

Our map makers, Captains J. B. Peters and B. D. G. Berry, have received a tribute in the Foreword, but I must add my own gratitude for their unfailing co-operation and their skilful interpretation of my demands.

Above all I am deeply grateful to Colonels H. M. D. Shaw, D.S.O., and N. M. Macleod for their constant encouragement and advice.

Outside the Regiment we all owe a special debt to the following, who have given kind permission to use or quote from the documents mentioned : Colonel A. M. L. Harrison (late 4th Gurkhas)—private History of the 11th Indian Division; Lieutenant-Colonel L. N. Evans, M.B.E. (late 2nd Goorkhas)—diary of the last few days leading up to the fall of Singapore; Colonel R. M. Raynsford, D.S.O., D.L., J.P., late editor of *The Fighting Forces* (now *The Forces Magazine*), and Brigadier L. H. O. Pugh, C.B.E., D.S.O., who commanded the 33rd Indian Infantry Brigade, with the 4th Battalion under his command, for battle plans of Kyauk-padaung and Yenangyaung Oilfields taken from *The Fighting Forces* of February, 1947. We are indebted to the Director-General of the Imperial War Museum, London, for kind permission to reproduce plates 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12 and 13, which are Crown copyright.

The original crest designs on the cover and title page were drawn by Captain John Blyth.

Complete records of all British officers who served with the Regiment between 1940 and 1947 have not been obtainable. The

lists in Appendix 3 have been compiled from every available source and have been checked by many officers, whose help I gratefully acknowledge, but I regret the inevitable errors and omissions.

The first volume of our History has long been out of print, so to meet a frequent demand, I have included in Appendix 1 a summary of the salient events during the period 1815 to 1920.

This book owes its existence to my wife, without whose constant encouragement and forbearance it could never have been completed.

E. V. R. B.

“ GREENCROFT,”
COLYTON, DEVON.
MARCH, 1955.

CHAPTER ONE

1920-1927

INTRODUCTORY

THE first volume of the Regimental History, published in 1925, covered more than a hundred years, from the birth of the Regiment in 1815 to the end of the First World War. It closed with the home-coming of the 1st and 2nd Battalions and the disbandment of the 3rd Battalion.

The 1st Battalion had served in three theatres of war—France, Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Palestine—and after five and a half years overseas it reached Dharmasala in February, 1920. The 2nd Battalion had fought on the North-West Frontier in 1915 and 1917 and had finally returned from the Third Afghan War in September, 1919.

The 3rd Battalion, which was the only extra Battalion to be raised in the First World War, also took part in the Third Afghan War. It was disbanded at Quetta in March, 1921, but was to be reborn twenty years later to enjoy a new, and very active, lease of life in the Second World War, as will appear in later chapters.

This volume, therefore, opens at a time when the two Regular Battalions were at home and together, for the first time since 1913. They might have expected, by pre-1914 precedents, to be left in this happy state for at least a year or two, but times had certainly changed. While the Indian Army was trying at the same time to demobilize and to prepare for post-war reorganization, it was faced with continued operational commitments, particularly on the North-West Frontier.

The internal situation was also far from peaceful due to the activities of various independence or revolutionary movements which had gathered impetus during the recent war. Fortunately we need not be concerned, in a Regimental History, with the causes of these political or nationalist upheavals, but only with their effects on Army and Regimental life.

In short the two tasks of Frontier Defence and Internal Security

were in future to absorb more troops than ever before. The former task was to make its first claim, on both Battalions at once, in October, 1920, and the second in due course provided tiresome "holiday tasks" during the interludes between Frontier tours. Dharmasala, indeed, became no more than an occasional or temporary home for its wandering family.

The two Battalions thus spent only eight months together, while officers and men came and went : officers returning from various war-time appointments or departing on leave and release; the Gurkha ranks mostly to and from furlough. Pensioning or mustering-out was seriously restricted by Battalions having to retain a high peace establishment of 894. Many, therefore, who wished to leave had to wait a year or more until their services could be spared.

As a further step in modernization, following the war-time introduction of free rations, the Government, represented by the M.W.S. (Military Work Services), had taken over the upkeep of barracks by the end of 1919, when the old Hutting Grant system was abolished. The problem of the numerous Battalion-owned buildings, which the M.W.S. were at first reluctant to take over, was partially settled by the Government purchase of certain ancillary buildings early in 1920. Many years were to pass, however, before other buildings, such as Gurkha Officers' Clubs and Institutes, were accepted as necessities rather than luxuries by the later M.E.S. (Military Engineer Services).

Before we follow each Battalion in turn to the North-West Frontier we must explain how the necessity for extra garrisons and field forces had arisen. In the Khyber Pass area, which was the 1st Battalion's destination, the Third Afghan War had disclosed the weakness and unreliability of the local Militia (the Khyber Rifles) without the close support of Regular troops.

A Regular-brigade garrison had therefore been established at Landi Kotal with a second brigade in the Ali Masjid-Jamrud area. Fortunately the Afridis of the Tirah country did not become a nuisance until about ten years later, but farther south, in Waziristan, the tribesmen had actively supported their kindred Afghan invaders and had risen in open revolt. Punitive expeditions had to deal first with the Tochi Wazirs and then with the Mahsuds at the end of 1919 and early 1920. The tribesmen were found to be better armed and better supplied with ammunition than ever before as a result of the defection of the local Militia and the looting of their Posts at Wana and elsewhere.

The Mahsud campaign occasioned some of the fiercest fighting in Frontier history before the striking force penetrated to the heart of Mahsud country, to destroy Makin and occupy a standing camp at Ladha. By the spring of 1920 most of the Mahsud sections had submitted, but others remained hostile, along with the Wana Wazirs, whose continued defiance was backed by Afghan agents.

Apart from a minor operation against Makin the forward Brigade of Wazir Force remained in occupation of Ladha throughout the summer of 1920 with three other brigades disposed along the lengthy line of communication through Jandola to Tank. The stage being thus set for the entry of the 2nd Battalion, we shall proceed to deal with its fifteen months of operational service with Wazir Force before returning to the 1st Battalion's more peaceful or routine tour of two and a half years in the Khyber.

THE 2ND BATTALION IN WAZIRISTAN, 1920-21

(Map 37, facing page 302)

Lieutenant-Colonel M. E. Dopping-Hepenstal, who had added a C.B.E. for the Third Afghan War to his two D.S.Os. won with the 1st Battalion overseas, had gone home on leave in May, 1920, so the Battalion joined the 21st L. of C. Brigade in October under the command of Major H. M. D. Shaw, D.S.O. Arriving at Sorarogha on 25th October, 1920, the Battalion at once took up its somewhat monotonous duties of daily Road Protection up and down the Tank Zam valley. Supply columns of those days had yet to be motorized and roads built for them, and still consisted of thousands of plodding pack animals, mostly camels. These naturally offered tempting targets for snipers and raiding gangs, as close and continuous protection was never possible. Minor incidents were, therefore, not uncommon.

On 10th November a strong composite company, 170 strong, with Major N. F. Graeme in command and Lieutenant F. A. Morris as Company Officer, was attached to 2/41st Dogras, of the 24th Brigade, for the long-planned advance to Wana. When the column reached Wana on 22nd December in the face of only minor opposition, the 2/1st Company halted for a time on the site of the old camp of 1894, where the 1st Battalion had successfully repulsed a heavy night attack (see Chapter IX of the first volume). The Wana Wazirs remained comparatively quiet during the next three months of demonstrations and flag marches, and the Company returned to the Battalion by 1st April, 1921.

Meanwhile, near Sorarogha there had been several clashes with raiding gangs. On one occasion at the end of November, 1920, when Captain J. L. F. O'Ferrall, the Adjutant, was mounting guards near camp, news came in that Mahsud raiders were attacking a camel convoy to the south. The guards were quickly doubled to the scene and after a brisk action, during which Jemadar Narainsing Thapa's section cornered and killed six Mahsuds in a cave, the enemy were driven off. The prompt and effective action of the two above-mentioned officers was highly commended in messages from both the Force and Brigade Commanders.

Lieutenant-Colonel M. E. Dopping-Hepenstal returned from leave to reassume command early in December. Later that month, piqueting troops of the Battalion on "Ahnai Right" and "Ahnai Left," two dominating heights above the Ahnai Tangi, were engaged by a strong Mahsud gang. Havildar Lachman Gurung boldly sallied out with a section, drove the enemy out of a sangar, and shot down four of the fugitives—for which exploit he was awarded an immediate I.D.S.M.

In another clash early in March one Mahsud was killed and two were captured for the loss of one Rifleman killed. This action again earned commendation from above.

On 23rd April, when the Battalion itself was operating to the south, Captain J. G. Simons, M.C., took command of the protective troops moving north to gain contact with those moving south from Ladha. At the liaison-point, where the up and down camel convoys had begun to cross each other, heavy fire was suddenly opened by a large body of tribesmen later reported at 200 strong and led by the notorious gang leader Musa Khan. The neighbouring permanent piquets were neutralized by fire and casualties in the valley mounted rapidly. Captain Simons and Lieutenant R. S. Kidd, who accompanied him, were both severely wounded as well as both officers of 25th Punjabis (from Ladha). But despite his crippling wound through the knee Captain Simons gallantly rallied the troops and held the enemy at bay until the arrival of the two Mobile Columns from north and south, thereby earning a well-deserved Bar to his M.C. Lieutenant R. S. Kidd most unfortunately died from his abdominal wound next day.

The Battalion was involved in one more action, at Tower Piquet near the Ahnai Tangi, on 24th May. Two platoons, one under Jemadar Narainsing Thapa (of the recent cave exploit), broke up a determined attack and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy at a cost of three killed and two wounded. For their gallantry on this

occasion Jemadar Narainsing Thapa and Naik (later to become Subedar) Dringsing Rana were awarded I.D.S.Ms.

No further hostile incidents occurred during the remainder of the Battalion's stay at Sorarogha, and at the end of December it left Wazir Force to reach Dharmasala on 11th January, 1922.

Certain changes which took place during 1921 in equipment and establishments, etc., may be recorded here. The 1908 pattern of khaki web equipment was issued in place of the leather bandoliers and belts. Vickers Machine Guns and Stokes (3-inch) Mortars were also added to the unit armament for the first time. A new battalion establishment was introduced in April providing for the addition of a Headquarters Company to the four other companies and a total strength of 941 Gurkha ranks. April also saw the introduction of revised and better rates of pay for British officers and of both pay and pensions for all Gurkha ranks.

The Indian General Service Medal 1908 (green and blue riband) with clasp "Waziristan 1919-21" was awarded to all ranks who served with the Battalion in Wazir Force.

Thus ended the 2nd Battalion's first post-war visit to Waziristan, but before leaving this part of the Frontier to join the 1st Battalion in the Khyber, a momentous change in policy must be mentioned. The Government of India decided, early in 1922, to locate the main garrison of Waziristan at Razmak instead of Ladha and to build a circular motor road to connect it with the Tochi road in the north and the Tank Zam road, already under construction, in the south. The occupation of the Razmak plateau and the establishment of the new fortress camp were duly accomplished in the early months of 1923. This marked the beginning of a new semi-forward policy or, as it was often described, a process of "peaceful penetration," the results of which will come under review by stages as Battalions of the Regiment visit and revisit the country one after another during the next twenty-five years.

THE 1ST BATTALION IN THE KHYBER, 1920-23

Conditions in the Khyber area differed considerably from those described in Waziristan. The Shinwaris and other local tribes were comparatively tame, and movement along the first-class metalled road, to or from Peshawar, was free and easy. The Khyber area had, indeed, become the foremost bastion for the defence of India against external aggression from the north-west rather than a base for tribal control, like the new Razmak. The tribesmen had naturally been unsettled by the recent Afghan incursions and had to be

persuaded that the troops had come to stay. The steady development of the hutted camps at Landi Kotal and also near the border at Landi Khana, together with the building of the new Khyber railway, soon gave visual proofs of permanent occupation. The construction of this strategic broad-gauge line through the precipitous gorges of this often-used invasion route called for great engineering skill and ingenuity. It also provided welcome work and wages for unskilled local labour. Work continued throughout the Battalion's tour and was nearing completion on its departure in 1923. An ingenious rope-way system carried on high pylons was used to transport small loads of supplies and stores up the Khyber before the railway came into use. It was not immune from wily pilferers with long poles, but it served its purpose well.

Colonel H. A. Holditch, D.S.O., late 5th Gurkhas, assumed command from Major A. Latham, D.S.O. (who had brought the Battalion back from Egypt), two months before the Khyber move in October, 1920, but many changes occurred during 1921. When Colonel Holditch left in January, 1921, for a Brigade Command, Major Latham, Captain D. D. Gracey, M.C., Major A. F. Inglis, O.B.E., and Major D. H. Minchinton, M.C., all had their turn until Lieutenant-Colonel H. M. D. Shaw, D.S.O., took over permanently (on transfer from the 2nd Battalion) on 1st November, 1921.

As soon as it arrived at Landi Kotal in October, 1920, the Battalion found itself heavily committed to guards and protective duties. Numerous posts and piquets required permanent garrisons and the long sector of camp perimeter had to be fully manned by night against thieves for ever on the prowl. All the skilled labour for the railway, which was imported from India, had to live inside the camp, and the increased perimeter demanded further guards. The hampering effect of these heavy duties during a period of constant changes of officers and men is frequently stressed in the contemporary records.

There was to be no alleviation of the heavy duties, however, until the tribesmen had settled down sufficiently to be entrusted with a share of protective tasks, including the manning of certain camp and permanent piquets, early in 1922. The Indian and Gurkha units of the Garrison (but not the British Battalion) also had to do periodical spells of three months' duty in the lower and unhealthier camp at Landi Khana, near the Afghan border. There two companies were absorbed by defended posts, which in time became concrete fortresses, at Bagh Springs and Khargali Ridge on the dominating heights to the west, and also at Frontier Post.

At Landi Khana the perimeter also had to include a labour camp, so "nights in bed"—to use the favourite formula—became of only singular significance. An attempt was made to allow Gurkha units to spend the hotter summer months at Landi Kotal and to confine their Landi Khana tours to the winter months. The 1st Battalion tours fell: first from March to June, 1921; again from mid-December, 1921, to mid-April, 1922; and finally from November, 1922, to February, 1923; so it was fairly lucky in the draw.

During the first Landi Khana spell in the spring of 1921 there were several isolated and ineffective sniping incidents, but a more serious clash occurred near Frontier Post at the end of May. A risky routine process had become established—and against which the Battalion had protested in vain—of sending out standing patrols from Frontier Post to occupy sangared positions close to the border by day. One of these, at Netcher's Knoll, was the scene of a carefully planned ambush by a gang of forty Zakka Khel Afridis on 27th May. The patrol of eleven men moving out in half-light was suddenly assailed in dead ground by heavy fire from the sangar itself and from covering positions elsewhere. Every man in the patrol was hit in the first burst, three killed outright and eight wounded, and the raiders made off with six rifles. Three of the less severely wounded Gurkhas opened fire on the enemy and killed one whose corpse and rifle were left on the ground. Permission was then given for the sangar to be destroyed and the patrol system was altered.

Routine duties occupied the Battalion during the second half of 1921 at Landi Kotal and severely limited the occasions when more than a company could be spared for field training.

A District Championship was held to test platoons, detailed without warning, in a variety of both military and athletic events. The Battalion did well in these by winning the two most important professional events, tactical and drill. It also won the District Football Tournament and repeated this success the following year.

The Battalion moved to Landi Khana for the second time a few weeks after Lieutenant-Colonel H. M. D. Shaw assumed command in November, 1921, and was still there when H.R.H. The Prince of Wales visited the Khyber on 5th March, 1922. It was unfortunate that only about half the Battalion could be paraded owing to the heavy duties, and the hill-top posts had to be content with a bird's-eye view. On return to Landi Kotal in April duties were found to be partly eased by the new Khyber Khassadars' occupation of the outer ring of camp piquets. Thieves and marauders continued to

prowl round the perimeter at night, but otherwise the local tribesmen were well content with the good money they were earning as railway labourers. Later in the year the 2nd Brigade at Ali Masjid and Jamrud was very much reduced as a step towards leaving only one Battalion near Ali Masjid under command of Landi Kotal Brigade.

The long-considered and often hotly debated scheme for the complete regrouping and renumbering of all Indian Army units, except the Gurkha Brigade, came into force at the end of 1922. Twenty Infantry Groups were formed with new numbers as Regiments, each consisting of up to five active battalions and one (numbered 10th) training battalion.

The ten Gurkha Regiments were spared the renumbering and the formation of any training battalions but a half-hearted attempt was made to apply the Group system and numbering. One Quarterly Army List, for January, 1923, was, indeed, published with Gurkha regiments paired in Groups 21 to 25, but these Group numbers were quickly dropped. The Group system for the posting or interchange of senior officers down to Company Commanders was all that prevailed. The 1st and 4th Gurkhas naturally fell into one Group as close neighbours and old friends, and a glance at the list of officers, 1921–39, given in Appendix 3 (A), will show how often such interchanges occurred.

The permanent postings down to Company Commanders had been published at the end of 1921, but the uncertainties of the junior officers were not relieved until the middle of 1923. Inevitably a number of officers then had to accept transfers between the two Battalions or to other regiments. A number of others had already decided to accept "the Montague Millions,"—the term applied to the Surplus Officers Scheme published in May, 1922.

The reshuffle of officers and men due to demobilization and post-war reforms was thus completed in the middle of 1923, but the "exigencies of the service" continued to deny any suggestion of a return to normal peace routine.

To return to the 1st Battalion in the Khyber: one such exigency disappointed its hopes of returning to Dharmasala on the completion of its two years' tour in October, 1922. The concentration of troops that autumn for the occupation of Razmak, and the holding of others in reserve, caused a postponement of relief until the following spring. A third period of heavy duties at Landi Khana thus followed, from November, 1922, to February, 1923, before the Battalion got away to Dharmasala at the end of April.

On the very eve of its departure from Landi Kotal on 20th April the Battalion sadly bade farewell to Lieutenant-Colonel H. M. D. Shaw, D.S.O., who had done so much for it in his fifteen months of command. His appointment as instructor at the Senior Officers' School, Belgaum, was not officially confirmed until 1st December, 1923, from which date Lieutenant-Colonel H. Holderness, D.S.O., was appointed permanent commandant—after officiating for eight months.

Lieutenant-Colonel Holderness wrote in the Digest of Services that no record of Colonel Shaw's command would be complete without mention of his strenuous labours, which in little more than a year restored the accounts of the Battalion Funds (including the men's private savings) to a sound and workable basis after seven years of war-time confusion. He added: "this part of post-war reconstruction was due solely to Colonel Shaw's ability and energy, and it was peculiarly his own work both in inception and execution."

THE 2ND BATTALION, 1922-23

It is now time to revert to the 2nd Battalion, which had enjoyed only a little over two months at Dharmsala after its return from Wazir Force, when it was summoned to the Plains for another exigency. In March, 1922, only a few days after Colonel M. E. Dopping-Hepenstal, C.B.E., D.S.O., had ended his long and distinguished service with the Regiment, the Battalion moved down to Lahore under the temporary command of Major N. F. Graeme. The Punjab was then in a state of some unrest due to the activities of the Akali Sikh movement, fostered by a revolutionary society known as the Shiromani Gurdhwara Parbhandak Committee, or S.G.P.C.

After standing by, with two companies in Lahore and two others detached to Ambala, ready if necessary to support the Police in making arrests, the Battalion was allowed to stand down and return to Dharmsala early in May.

Towards the end of June Lieutenant-Colonel A. E. Johnson returned from leave after disbandment of the 1/11th Gurkhas, with whom he had won a D.S.O., and assumed permanent command of his old Battalion.

Apart from the detachment of a company to Fort Govindgarh, Amritsar, in December, 1922, there were no further alarms or excursions until early the following summer. At the end of April, 1923, the two Battalions were together in Dharmsala, but only for

a few months. "The Akali disturbers of the public tranquillity," as a Punjab Government letter described them, again became active and in August the 1st Battalion was called out for another phase of what was quite unofficially described as the "Third Sikh War." As a preliminary one company had to be despatched in July to join half the 1/4th Gurkhas at Nabha, where it was feared that disturbances might follow the deposition of the Maharaja for misrule.

THE 1ST BATTALION, AMRITSAR, 1923-24

Moving to Chakki, a few miles outside Pathankote, early in August, the 1st Battalion, less a company but reinforced by another from the 2nd Battalion, continued to stand by for several weeks. It appeared that the Punjab Government had decided to arrest the aforementioned S.G.P.C. but hesitated to take the fateful step from week to week. As time passed in an atmosphere of order, counter-order, and disorder, malaria began to spread and a further platoon from the 2nd Battalion was brought down to make up strength. When two companies (both 1/1st) were hastily summoned to Amritsar on 5th September decisive action appeared imminent, but the long-postponed arrests were not made until the night of 13th/14th October, with the companies in close attendance but without any of the feared reactions. The rest of the 1st Battalion had been alerted and moved to Amritsar the same night, leaving the 2nd Battalion details behind at Chakki, for the latter to return to Dharmsala a fortnight later.

From mid-October, 1923, therefore, the 1st Battalion found itself somewhat "uncomfortably unsettled" in Fort Govindgarh, and there it remained until the following May.

One company was detached to Lahore in mid-November, but the Nabha company rejoined a fortnight later. In January, 1924, the members of the second S.G.P.C. were arrested and serious trouble was only narrowly averted by the presence of two companies in close support of the Police.

BOTH BATTALIONS AT DHARMSALA, 1924-25

From May, 1924, until October, 1925, when the 2nd Battalion went to Razmak for the first time, the two Battalions were together except for a break during the winter of 1924-25. The latter was due to the 1st Battalion making the first of four successive winter excursions to training camps at Hoshiarpur and Jullundur Cantonment. The regular routine which became established was for the

Battalion to leave Dharmsala about the middle of October and to march, with a camel baggage train, through Kangra and across the Beas at Dera Gopipur to a camp site near Hoshiarpur. The crossing at Dera Gopipur normally presented no difficulties if the monsoon floods in the Beas had fallen sufficiently for the bridge of boats to be established. But owing to abnormal floods on the first occasion, in 1924, a laborious ferrying process became necessary and the camels objected strongly to being forcibly thrust and folded up in the flat-bottomed boats. Some of them inevitably broke loose or leapt overboard and it was surprising to see how strongly these ungainly animals could swim. But their efforts to land were ludicrous in the extreme as their long legs usually grounded them at a depth where the current immediately swept them off their feet again. The modern mechanized army misses many such experiences of those primitive times and would probably chafe at the slow progress of those pleasant autumn and spring treks to and from the plains.

The training camps were usually situated at Basi Kikran, or Adamwal, about four or five miles east of Hoshiarpur, where there was admirable ground for training and field firing. Shortly before Christmas, according to invariable custom, camp was moved to Jullundur Cantonment for the usual Week of social gaiety followed by several months of joint training, or exercises with the local garrison, before the uphill migration began.

A happy feature of these winter excursions was the presence of one or other of the 4th Gurkha Battalions from Bakloh. The brother Battalions of the Group, already mentioned, thus had an opportunity to get together, and indeed to inaugurate a yearly Gurkha Dance which became a famous occasion throughout the Punjab. The 1/4th Gurkhas were the first partners to share in the opening winter excursion of 1924–25 and it was unfortunate that the 2/1st had to remain in Dharmsala “for financial reasons.”

The 1st Battalion enjoyed the better training facilities as well as the social amenities provided by these visits to the Plains for four successive winters before it paid its first visit to Razmak in the spring of 1928. But we must return to the 2nd Battalion, which was allowed to remain undisturbed in Dharmsala from May, 1922, until October, 1925, apart from the usual company detachments—to Amritsar, and another to deal with trouble in Suket State at the end of 1924.

In February, 1924, Major M. Wylie, who had been transferred from the 1/4th Gurkhas a year earlier, took over officiating

command in place of Lieutenant-Colonel A. E. Johnson, D.S.O., who proceeded on leave pending retirement. Major Wylie was thus in command when the Battalion moved to Razmak in October, 1925, and his appointment was confirmed in March, 1926.

THE 2ND BATTALION'S FIRST VISIT TO RAZMAK, 1925-28

(Map 37, facing page 302)

The arrival of the 2nd Battalion at Razmak in October, 1924, marked the beginning of a period during which the Regiment was seldom unrepresented there, up to the time of the withdrawal of the regular garrison at the end of 1947. Conditions were peaceful enough during the first of the Battalion's three inter-war visits. The tribesmen appeared to be settling down and were receiving ample funds from contracts—or sub-contracts, as they were often too lazy to work themselves—for work on roads or barracks. Fortunately, at Razmak the Khyber practice of harbouring imported labourers inside the camp was not adopted, and a special coolie camp, or walled serai, was provided for them.

Perimeter duties were thus not unduly heavy and permanent duties were restricted to certain camp piquets which were eventually converted into impregnable Peel towers demanding smaller garrisons.

Garrisoned staging posts were maintained for some years along the seventy-mile road which formed the garrison's L. of C. to Bannu, but the protection of pack convoys—gradually replaced by mechanical transport—was largely entrusted to local levies or Khassadars. The Razmak garrison, consisting of one British, three Indian, and two Gurkha battalions, provided a mobile column which periodically marched out to show the flag.

This column, which usually included four of the infantry units, with Mountain Gunners and Sappers, made regular excursions or round trips as far afield as Jandola and Wana to the south and Datta Khel in the Tochi Valley to the north. Even the recently truculent Mahsuds seldom interfered with the progress of these Columns although a few hot-heads or irreconcilable outlaws occasionally indulged in sniping. The Mahsuds were well aware, of course, that the Medium Artillery in Razmak was in as effective range as it had previously been at Ladha of their main tribal settlements at Makin, and retribution could be swift.

The 2nd Battalion marched out with the Column in January, 1926, to follow a route, along which it was to fight many actions

in 1938-39, leading through Razani, Damdil, Datta Khel and back over the Lwargi Narai.

A second Column in April took it to scenes of its recent activities with Wazir Force down the Tank Zam, through Sorarogha and Jandola, to Wana and back. The only incident occurred on the outward halt at Tauda China when a burst of sniping wounded two Riflemen, one mortally.

Otherwise local hostilities during 1926 were confined to inter-tribal scraps along the disputed Mahsud-Wazir boundary, which ran rather dubiously along the Shora Algad, a shallow valley only half a mile west of Razmak camp. Companies were often called out to stop these local battles when they occurred too near to camp.

These affairs were usually confined to the summer months, when the Wazirs were in the habit of occupying the plateau with their numerous flocks and "gypsy encampments" known as "Kirris," but the disputed boundary remained unsettled for many years ahead.

The 2nd Battalion was happy to renew a very old friendly association with the British Battalion in Razmak, the 2nd Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters, alongside which it had soldiered in the Sikkim campaign of 1888 and the Tirah campaign of 1897. The Sherwood Foresters presented a silver salver, for the third time, and were presented with silver-mounted kukris by the 2nd Battalion, to mark this renewed liaison.

In the sporting sphere the Battalion football team, led by Captain E. M. Hodder, won the Gurkha Brigade Football Cup at Abbottabad for the first time on record.

At this period officers were also reasonably free to roam the country and to enjoy some successful chikor shooting, a sport which was denied in the later troubled years.

There is no need to follow the Razmak routine and column excursions throughout the rest of the tour, which ended with the Battalion's departure for Dharmasala in December, 1927.

On its return journey it was waylaid by Rawalpindi District for exercises and manœuvres at Sang Jani, and during January, 1928, at Hasan Abdal, but it then moved to Jullundur for a ten-day reunion with the 1st Battalion early in February.

The 1st Battalion had originally been ordered to relieve the 2nd in Razmak, but the Commander-in-Chief stepped in to arrange this welcome Regimental reunion. The 1st Battalion's departure for Razmak was therefore deferred until March, 1928, but its visit

there will be recorded in the next chapter. There are still some gaps to fill, in the summer interludes between 1924 and 1928, and a few items of general interest.

DHARMSALA, 1925-27

Among these was the construction of the new Kangra valley light railway which began in 1925 as an essential link for a big hydro-electric installation at Jogindar Nagar, at the foot of the Kulu valley. When it was completed and opened for ordinary traffic about three years later it brought Dharmsala within twenty-eight miles of a railway station at Nagrota, a few miles distant from Kangra. The railway was first used for troop moves from Dharm-sala in May, 1929, and thereafter came into more regular use though it took several of the "toy trains" to move a complete, battalion to Pathankote.

Transport up the Kangra valley had indeed developed by slow stages from the days of Kipling's "rattling tonga bar," still painfully remembered by travellers up to the opening phase of this volume. Motor "taxis" still cost a rupee a mile in the middle twenties, but fleets of country buses and cars were plying more cheaply by the opening of the thirties.

The introduction of a Training Company for each Gurkha battalion in April, 1926, brought the Gurkha Brigade a short step nearer the Training Battalion system which had been applied to the rest of the Indian Army. The two Training Companies in Dharmsala continued to be separate entities, however, until the outbreak of the Second World War led to their fusion, followed by a consequent vast expansion into a Regimental Training Centre.

A sad tragedy occurred on 3rd June, 1927, when Major H. D. Minchinton, M.C., was killed while climbing the peak known as the "Mon," which he and a few others had often scaled before.

The Commander-in-Chief, Lord Birdwood, visited Dharmsala in October, 1927, and the much debated problem of finding a better home and training base for the Regiment—possibly at Palampur—was submitted to him without any conclusive result "owing to financial stringency"! The question was to be raised again, and more insistently, in 1931, as will appear later.

Colonel Holderness paid a summer visit to Malaun Fort, where the Regiment had its birth in 1815, and took another party there later in the year. They were sad to find the old Fort rapidly crumbling away, but were able to make sketches from which a wooden scale model was later constructed as a Battalion trophy.

CHAPTER TWO

1928-1937

THE 1ST BATTALION AT RAZMAK, 1928-30

(*Map 37, facing page 302*)

SOON after the Regimental reunion in Jullundur the 1st Battalion made its way to Razmak by 14th March, 1928, having, as was customary at this time, marched the five stages from railhead at Bannu.

Like all new-comers, it was first located in the so-called Lower Camp, where barrack building had progressed far slower than in the Upper Camp and much of the accommodation still consisted of Wana huts or tents, I.P., E.P. (double-fly), with mud walls, and some with fire-places.

It was not concerned with the Razmak column march to Datta Khel at the end of 1928, but moved out at the end of June, with a mountain battery and some sappers, to Bibezei, a few miles south of Tauda China. Its task there, which lasted just over a month, was to cover the repair of a bridge which had been maliciously blown up by a Mahsud gang using an old aeroplane bomb. It was a most unhealthy place at this time of year, and many of the men contracted malaria.

Lieutenant-Colonel H. Holderness, D.S.O., departed during July on leave pending re-posting, and handed over command to Major M. C. Baldwin, M.C., whose promotion was confirmed in October.

The British officers of the Battalion came to Razmak still fired by the "horsy" tradition imbued in them by their late Horse-Gunner District Commander at Lahore, General Wardrop, and had gallantly continued to wear breeches, field boots and spurs where horses could no longer carry them. Their efforts to emulate mountain goats in such footwear proved painful, and in one case (when a spur caught in a holly bush) nearly fatal.

There was great relief—and merriment elsewhere—when a few

months later they emerged with milk-white knees, clad in shorts for the first time. Foot fashions were also subject to much controversy in those days. Some units preferred to retain ammunition boots, with a new style of anklet puttees instead of the restricting long puttees; others maintained that the Pathan chaplis (sandals) were the only foot-gear in which troops could compete with the tribesmen's astonishing speed in the hills. Both Battalions of the Regiment eventually adopted boots and anklet puttees, and found them more serviceable for all conditions of wear and tear, and for ankle support.

The fickleness of military, as of feminine, fashions was proved at a much later period, when shorts became anathema and knees had to be permanently covered against the malaria menace, not only at night as in this earlier period.

The Battalion accompanied two excursions by the Mobile Column later in 1928. During the first, to Ladha and back in September, a few hostile shots were fired, causing two casualties in another unit. In November the column stood by at Razani ready to support the Tochi Scouts, who, however, successfully persuaded certain mischievous sections of the Wazirs to keep the peace. The Battalion cordoned Mami Rogha on one occasion to cover a search, but all was quiet on this future battle-ground of the Regiment—(in 1938–39, 1942 and 1947, as will appear in due course).

Ladha and Razani were again visited by column marches during 1929, and there was considerable activity around Razmak, in the form of Brigade or Battalion field days, throughout the summer.

Otherwise, the rest of the Battalion's tour at Razmak can be summed up in the Brigade Commander's parting message in March, 1930: "You leave behind you a memory of efficiency, good fellowship and contentment, of which any battalion might be proud."

Parting letters and orders couched in the usual formal and meaningless style have seldom been quoted in this volume, but this one rings truer than most and certainly reflects the feelings of all ranks. (Inspection reports have been banned for the same reason.)

The 2nd Battalion was still in Dharmsala to greet its senior partner at the end of March, 1930, but they were both on the move again early in May for further tiresome duties in aid of the Civil Power.

Before joining the headlong rush of both Battalions to the Plains,

however, it is appropriate to mention that the 2nd Battalion had filled in its sojourn in Dharmsala since early 1928 with winter excursions similar to those of the 1st Battalion already described. In the 1928–29 winter it was first diverted to manœuvres near Gujrat before going to Jullundur, but in the following winter it adopted the more usual custom of camping at Adamwal, near Hoshiarpur, prior to the mid-December move into Jullundur. Before it returned to Dharmsala Lieutenant-Colonel M. Wylie left to become Recruiting Officer for Gurkhas at Gorakhpur, and Major N. F. Graeme took the Battalion home. On arrival in Dharmsala, Lieutenant-Colonel S. S. Whitaker, M.C., who had been transferred from 7th Gurkhas, took over command with effect from 11th March, 1930.

An event of Regimental interest during 1928 was the purchase, by the 1st Battalion originally and later jointly by both Battalions, of an Officers' Bungalow for conversion into a Gurkha Family Hospital, known as "The Memorial Hospital." This hospital was expanded in the years ahead and became a model of its kind, under the devoted and skilful direction of the (lady) Doctor Marian, who was still in office in the years following the Second World War.

During 1929 both Battalions had been reorganized on a new establishment which provided for a H.Q. wing, a new machine-gun company (with six Vickers guns) and only three instead of four rifle companies. This change naturally had a considerable effect on the tactical distribution of a battalion with fewer effective sub-units to undertake various roles, or to be disposed in depth for attack or defence, but a four-rifle-company organization was reintroduced early in the Second World War.

The aforementioned move of both Battalions (and also of the 1/4th Gurkhas from Bakloh) to the Punjab plains early in May, 1930, seemed to bode serious trouble.

The decoding of lengthy cipher wires on 30th April, 1930, barely preceded the sudden noisy arrival of apparently innumerable impressed civilian buses, some so hastily despatched that they arrived with little petrol and quite a number with no brakes. The cantonment had never before faced the problem of receiving and marshalling such a motley collection of nearly 300 vehicles on its narrow roads and single accessible parade ground. But even the late-night arrivals were finally put in place in time for the downhill race the following day, a Jehu at every wheel. The destinations were: 1st Battalion, Amritsar, and 2nd Battalion,

Lahore; and it was an anti-climax when both discovered that there was, in fact, no Third or Fourth Sikh War. Perhaps the arrival of the troops was a sufficient deterrent for the trouble-makers, but all that followed was a hot-weather spell of uneventful garrison duty up to September.

Both Battalions were allowed to do collective training from camps in the valley that winter instead of moving down to the Plains again, but they were soon separated.

In February the 1st Battalion was ordered to Peshawar to take part in the operations then in progress against the Afridis on the Khajuri and Aka Khel Plains.

THE 1ST BATTALION: AFRIDI OPERATIONS, 1931
(*Map 1, Khajuri Plain, page 21*)

The Peshawar District had been the scene throughout 1930 of serious disturbances fomented by the Red Shirt movement under the leadership of one Abdul Ghafar Khan—often referred to in the press as “the Frontier Gandhi” on account of his similar revolutionary activities in that area. This was a militant organization with a distinctive red-shirt “uniform,” which professed to champion the Congress Party’s Civil Disobedience Campaign in the rest of India, though on a religious basis it could have nothing in common with it. Its activities were far from civil, or merely disobedient, and during the summer and autumn many troops had to be called out to take action in Peshawar City and elsewhere, and indeed to garrison Peshawar Cantonment in face of what was almost a siege. The Frontier tribes were also incited to make incursions, and both the Mohmands on the north-east and the Afridis on the south-east were up in arms.

The Mohmands were temporarily pacified, but the Afridis from the Tirah swept down in large bands, beyond their traditional winter grazing-grounds on the Khajuri Plain (and the Aka Khel Plain north of it), to threaten Peshawar Cantonment itself.

When the 1st Battalion arrived at Peshawar on 15th February, 1931, a force consisting of the Nowshera and 2nd Infantry Brigades, with other arms, remained in occupation of posts near the foothills of the Plains to cover the completion of a network of motorable roads and to enforce a blockade. Other troops, which had been engaged in minor actions and clashes, had been withdrawn, and the final stage of the operations had been reached. This involved the construction of the permanent camps and posts from which garrisons were in future to control the Plains.

The Afridis remained defiant, and there were still gangs of hostiles in the field or lurking in the numerous cave areas along the line of the foothills. When the 1st Battalion marched out through Bara to join the Nowshera Brigade near Jhansi Post, on 18th February, all officers were summoned forward to watch the withdrawal from a village-destruction operation west of Fort Salop. Led by an over-enthusiastic guide they were driven rapidly into no man's land, but fortunately the enemy were not following up closely and contented themselves with a few parting shots.

The Battalion's first operational task was the destruction of a hostile cave settlement near Alam Kile, but this became more of a field-firing exercise than an action and there were no casualties. After a few more uneventful outings the Battalion moved on 2nd March, from the Brigade Camp at Jhansi Post to Jula Talao, on the Frontier Road, with two companies in a forward position at Nowshera Post. On 7th March it carried out a reconnaissance of the Mandai Gorge, south of Nowshera Post, as a preliminary to a planned operation on a larger scale against Spintigga.

This was, in fact, the last as well as the biggest night operation carried out by the Nowshera Brigade, and it took place on the night of 10th/11th March. The Battalion, less small post garrisons left behind, joined the advanced column of the Brigade near Nowshera Post at 0200 hours on the 11th. 1/11th Sikhs, less two companies, then led off as advanced guard up the Mandai Gorge, and 3rd Dogra provided piqueting troops. Following up to the southern end of the Gorge, 1/1st G.R. were then detailed to occupy the hills surrounding Spintigga, and were in position, as shown on the sketch map, by 0630 hours. One company bumped an enemy outpost on the way up and rushed the position after a brief exchange of fire, finding one corpse and two rifles.

Companies on the hills above Spintigga were continuously engaged with small parties of the enemy, and good targets were obtained on other tribesmen making off westwards. The village was quickly destroyed by a party of 2nd F.F. Rifles, and the withdrawal began at 1000 hours. The Afridis followed up one company of the 1st Battalion at a respectful distance, but otherwise did not interfere with the withdrawal, and troops were clear of the gorge by midday. There were no casualties in the column, but those of the enemy could not be accurately assessed.

Ten days later Nowshera Brigade moved back to its station, leaving only the 1st Battalion at Bara Fort, with a detachment at Nowshera Post, and 1/3rd G.R. at the new Fort Salop Camp with

detachments at Karawal and Jhansi Post. This marked the end of the real operational phase, and all troops on the Plains came under orders of Peshawar District.

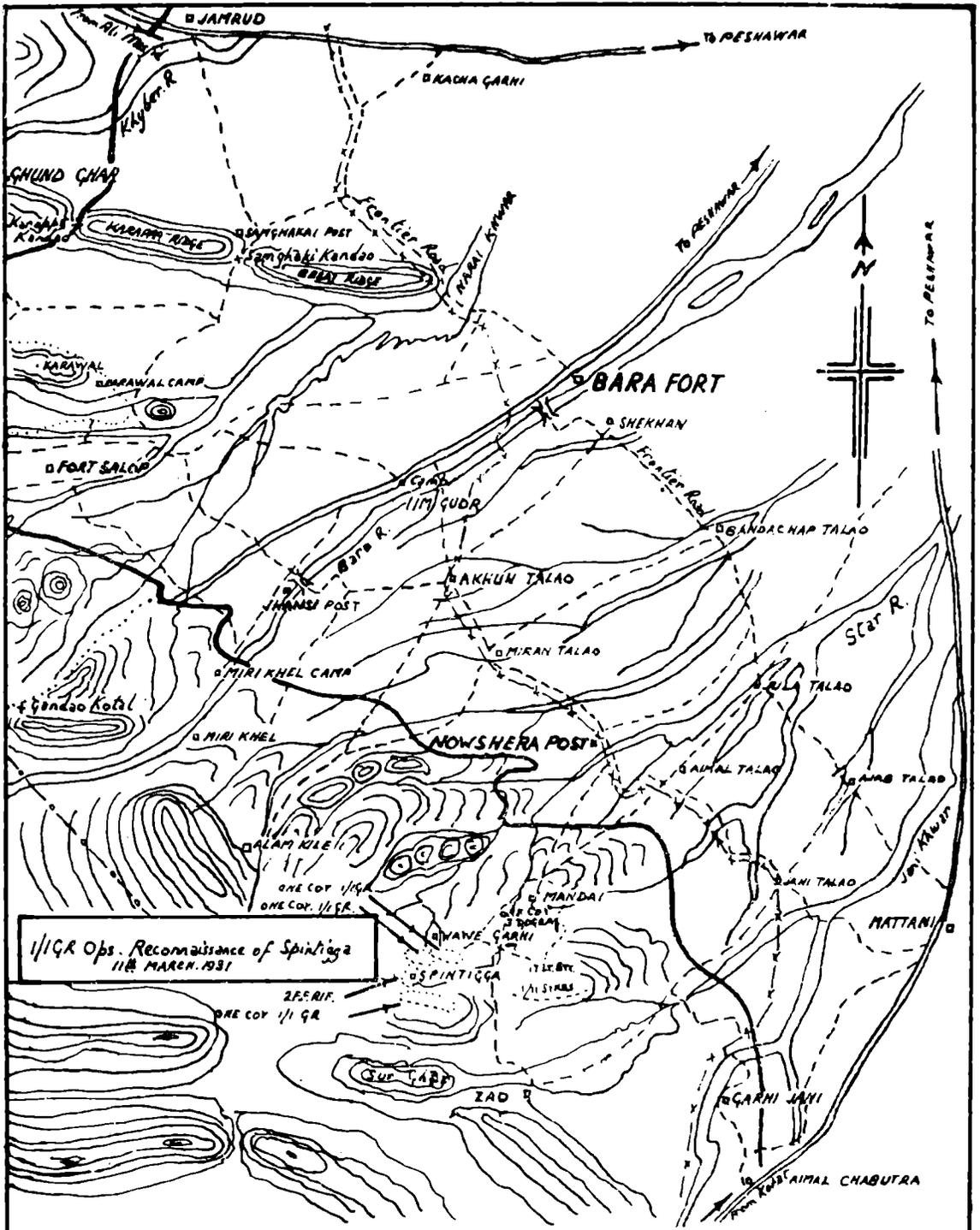
The Afridis, however, did not make their submission until October, and the Red Shirts continued to be a nuisance, so troops were often called out for raids or searches. Before moving into Peshawar on 18th May, the Battalion took part in a successful village raid early in April, and in a small operation to destroy caves a few miles east of Fort Salop on 4th May. During the latter, Major J. D. Ogilvy, who was commanding the rear guard, was hit in the leg by one of the few shots fired by the enemy that day.

In accordance with a system of relief inside the Peshawar Brigade, the Battalion took over garrison duties in Peshawar from mid-May, but was back again at Bara Fort at the end of November. It thus missed the alarms of Christmas Day in Peshawar, when troops were suddenly called out to deal with the Red Shirts. It moved out with a strong column including cavalry and armoured cars on 1st January, 1932, to raid a neighbouring village known to have been harbouring hostiles, but this was its last excursion. The Battalion was relieved by 1/4th G.R. on 14th January and left next day for Dharmsala, arriving there on the 22nd. The Indian General Service Medal 1908, with clasp "North-West Frontier 1930-31" was later awarded to all ranks who served on the Plains during the operational period.

It found Dharmsala deserted two months earlier by the 2nd Battalion (except for its Depot and Training Company) for its second tour of Razmak.

Since its return from Lahore in September, 1930, the 2nd Battalion had remained in Dharmsala, but at the end of December had to send another company to reinforce the one already in Amritsar since October, so its winter training was seriously curtailed. The unrest in Amritsar came to a head in March, 1931, when the executions took place of those convicted in the so-called Lahore Conspiracy Case. The companies stood by ready to assist the Police, but although rioting occurred the troops were not asked to intervene.

During the winter of 1930-31, the question of moving the Regimental Home from Dharmsala to Palampur was revived, but again it met with an adverse decision from Army Headquarters. It is doubtful if any of the Gurkha ranks would have welcomed such a move, and the British officers were much divided in their



1/1GR Ops. Reconnaissance of Spintigga
11th MARCH 1931

SCALE.



CHART OF POSTS, MTRROADS & TRACKS CONSTRUCTED DURING THE OPERATIONS 1930-31

LEGEND

- Line of Foot-hills —————
- Metalled M.T. Roads = = = = =
- Shingled " — — — — —
- M.T. Track
- Administrative Border - x - x - x -
- Operational Limit West of Gando Kotal - o - o -

SKETCH MAP 1
KHAJURI PLAIN

views, so there is no need to examine the detailed pros and cons so heatedly argued at the time.

Later, in 1931, the "financial stringency" so often mentioned in connection with such projects roused fellow feelings among both British and Gurkha officers. As a result of the economic crisis, which spread from America, all officers suffered a ten-per-cent cut in their pay from 1st December, 1931. Other economic measures were also introduced, many of them of a cheese-paring nature, such as reducing various allowances and establishments and increasing the replacement life of greatcoats.

THE 2ND BATTALION AT RAZMAK, 1931-33

(*Map 37, facing page 302*)

This second tour of the Battalion from December, 1931, to March, 1933, demands little space as the conditions were almost identical with those of the earlier visits of both Battalions.

After the occupation of Wana by a Regular garrison at the end of 1929 the two mobile columns made periodical flag marches to meet half-way in the neighbourhood of Kaniguram. In March, 1932, the Battalion accompanied one such column which went as far as the Sharawangi Narai, on the watershed between the Baddar Toi and Khaisora Valleys, to cover the survey of a proposed road to link Ladha and Wana. Only a few shots were fired during this outing and there were no casualties.

Further columns followed: to the Lwargi Narai, north of Razani, in April, and to Ladha again in June. A training march in November took the Battalion to the Sham Plain, which had not been visited by troops since 1902 but was to come into prominence in the operations of 1937, when a brigade was established at Coronation Camp. (*Map 36, Razmak, facing page 302.*)

The period from March, 1933, until the end of 1937, which was spent mainly at home in Dharmsala, must form part of a later instalment.

* * * *

The 1st Battalion in the normal course of events should have earned a peaceful interlude in Dharmsala before its next Frontier tour, due about the end of 1933. But an emergency arose which took it to Bengal in September, 1932, only nine months after it had returned from the Khajuri "war."

A terrorist campaign had caused widespread alarm and confusion in many parts of Bengal, and serious outrages had been

committed at Chittagong and elsewhere. Additional troops were, therefore, rushed to the main centres of disaffection: Comilla, Mymensing, Dacca, Saidpur, Midnapur, and lastly Bankura, which was to be the 1st Battalion's base for twelve months. Before the move took place Lieutenant-Colonel J. D. Ogilvy took over command from Colonel Baldwin, whose tenure had almost expired.

The conditions at Bankura were extremely uncomfortable until thatched-roof huts were built, and when the summer of 1933 came round the climate became most unpleasant and unhealthy. Long flag marches round the countryside took companies out in turn, and in most areas they met a friendly reception, as was only to be expected. The ordinary villagers had little sympathy with the disturbers of the peace, and the terrorists themselves proved craven when force was met by force—or by the mere threat of it.

The Battalion was due for the Khyber in October, 1933, and had its hopes raised in August by a rumour that it was likely to move up very soon to take part in operations against the Mohmands, but this proved wrong.

In fact it was allowed two months in Dharmsala, in company with the 2nd Battalion, before it moved on at the end of October to Landi Kotal. The rebuilding of the Bhurtpur Lines had begun and two companies had to live with the 2nd Battalion in the Tirah Lines. It returned from the Khyber two and a half years later to completely new barracks with practically all modern conveniences.

Leaving the 2nd Battalion for the time being in Dharmsala, where it was to remain until January, 1938, except for a short operational excursion to the "Mohmand War" in the autumn of 1935, we shall follow the 1st Battalion to the Khyber.

THE 1ST BATTALION IN THE KHYBER, 1933-36

The distribution of the Khyber garrison had changed since the Battalion's last visit nearly ten years earlier. Landi Khana camp had been abandoned in favour of a miniature castle at Char Bagh, on the hills above it, and this, with its satellite piquet towers, was held by two companies from a battalion at Landi Kotal.

The garrison of a battalion at Fort Salop with a company detachment at Jhansi Post, on the Khajuri Plain, was now also found from the Landi Kotal Brigade. These two duties occupied the Battalion in that order: the first in Landi Kotal and Char Bagh from October, 1933, until it moved to Fort Salop in July, 1934, to spend seven months there.

While split up at Landi Kotal and Char Bagh only a small element consisting of H.Q., one Rifle Company, and the M.G. Company could take part in the exercises with the Mobile Column. At Fort Salop, later, a somewhat larger column could be formed and this went out frequently to search cave areas and often to practise night movement across country. These limited opportunities for collective training compared most unfavourably with the scope of such training with the Razmak garrison, and Khyber duty can perhaps be summed up in that word—duty and little else, from a purely military aspect. There were compensations, indeed, in the sporting contests with many other units in the District, and in the social life of Peshawar.

Shortly after its return to Landi Kotal in March, 1935, the Battalion again took over the Char Bagh defences to free the duty battalion, 2/9th Jat, for column. A minor "war" had started near Ali Masjid, where a new road had been started to penetrate the Chora Valley, and some of the Afridis strongly resented this proposed "violation of their privacy." One company of the Battalion took over outpost positions near Ali Masjid, but the "war" fizzled out after no more than a few token rounds had been fired.

The operations in the Mohmand country, beginning in August, 1935, only affected the Battalion in the temporary transfer of Major W. St. J. Carpendale to command the 2nd Battalion when it joined Mohforce in September.

After an uneventful winter the 1st Battalion returned to Dharmsala in March, 1936, to enjoy nearly two years at home with the 2nd Battalion, whose record must now be resumed.

THE 2ND BATTALION, 1933-36

After the short reunion of the two Battalions in the autumn of 1933, the 2nd Battalion resumed the routine of training camps at Hoshiarpur and Jullundur during the two succeeding winters. Lieutenant-Colonel E. C. Mockler took over command from Lieutenant-Colonel S. S. Whitaker, M.C., in January, 1934, and was confirmed in his appointment two months later.

During the second winter at Jullundur the Battalion football team, led by Captain W. G. Gahan, had an unbeaten record, winning the Gurkha Brigade Football Cup for the second time, in addition to the Nepal Cup and the Lahore District Football Cup.

Colonel Mockler was on leave in England and Major Carpendale

took his place, as mentioned earlier, when the 2nd Battalion joined Mohforce in mid-September, 1935.

The Battalion was attached to the 2nd Infantry Brigade on the forward L. of C. and was based on Ghalanai for road-protection duties (*see Map 2, "Mohforce"*). One company, under Captain W. G. Gahan, joined Nowshera Brigade for a few days at the end of September for operations west of Wucha Jawar. The Guides became involved in fierce fighting at the head of the Wucha Jawar Valley on the 29th, and lost heavily, their Adjutant, Captain G. Meynell, being awarded what was, unfortunately, a posthumous V.C. The Peshawar Brigade, under Brigadier (later Field-Marshal) C. J. B. Auchinleck, operated westwards from Nahakki at the same time, but the 2nd Battalion did not become engaged.

During October the Battalion carried out some minor reconnaissances in force with other troops of 2nd Brigade, but no opposition was met. Road-protection and piqueting duties continued until the withdrawal of Mohforce began at the end of that month.

The forward brigades withdrew through Ghalanai by 2nd November, leaving the 2nd Brigade to cover the final move back through the Karappa Pass and Kilagao next day. The 2nd Battalion, now under Lieutenant-Colonel E. C. Mockler again, formed the rear guard from Ghalanai, but suffered no interference from the tribesmen, who had, indeed, come to terms on 15th October. It was only found necessary to keep the inevitable swarm of "scavengers" and would-be looters at a respectable distance. Mohforce ceased to exist from midnight 3rd/4th November.

On its way through Peshawar the 2nd Battalion enjoyed a brief reunion party with officers of the senior Battalion from the Khyber. The Indian General Service Medal 1908, with clasp "North West Frontier 1935," was awarded for the recent operations. Major Carpendale was mentioned in despatches and twelve Army Commander's Certificates were also awarded.

Four months after its return to Dharmasala in mid-November the 2nd Battalion was joined there by the 1st Battalion, and the association continued until January, 1938, when the 2nd Battalion departed for its third and final tour at Razmak.

This period, from the spring of 1936, calls for only brief comments. Both Battalions were together in the usual winter camps at Hoshiarpur and Jullundur for the first and last time, in 1936-37. The 1st Battalion repeated the procedure in 1937-38, but the 2nd was allowed to do mountain-warfare training near

Nagrota in preparation for its impending move to Waziristan.

The course of the large-scale operations of 1936 and 1937 in Waziristan was watched with envious hope, but both Battalions were to be engaged in the aftermath of this Frontier convulsion in due course, as will appear in the following chapter.

It remains to record a few events of general interest during the preceding few years.

In March, 1934, H.H. Maharaja Sir Joodha Shamshere Jang Bahadur Rana, Prime Minister of Nepal, was appointed Honorary Colonel of all Gurkha Regiments.

Consequent on the sad death of H.M. King George V, Colonel-in-Chief of the Regiment, on 20th January, 1936, the title of the Regiment was altered to the 1st King George the Fifth's Own Gurkha Rifles (The Malaun Regiment) with effect from 8th May, 1937. The short title then became: 1st K.G.V's O. Gurkha Rifles—one which it retained until after the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, when all Royal and similar titles were officially abolished.

A small change in nomenclature took place in October, 1934, when the existing Machine Gun Company was renamed the Support Company to conform with the British Army.



○ LINE OF PIQUETS ON L. of C

SKETCH MAP 2

MOHFORCE
 1935.

CHAPTER THREE

WAZIRISTAN: 1938-1940

(Maps 36 and 37, facing page 302)

RAZMAK had not seen the 1st Gurkhas for nearly five years when the 2nd Battalion arrived for its third and last tour of duty there in January, 1938. During this interval, while the two Battalions had ranged as far afield as Bengal and the Peshawar border, the situation in Waziristan had changed out of all recognition, and we shall need to survey past events to get a true perspective of the picture.

The occupation of Razmak in 1923 was followed by a long period of peace and lack of incidents, such as Waziristan had never known before. Our policy of peaceful penetration seemed to be succeeding beyond all expectations, and the taming of the tribes seemed to be an accomplished fact. It was fortunate indeed that the Mahsuds and Wazirs remained quiet while the Red Shirts, Afridis and Mohmands in turn were disturbing the peace around Peshawar between 1930 and 1935 (as described in the previous chapter).

But then, in 1936, the storm broke. The tribesmen had not changed after all, and had only been biding their time while a new generation grew up of irresponsible young hot-heads, impatient of control by their Elders and careless or ignorant of the painful lessons learnt by their fathers.

The time being ripe, the inevitable firebrand appeared, one Mirza Ali Khan, Faqir of Ipi, who skilfully exploited a minor Hindu-Moslem quarrel over an abduction case (known as the Islam Bibi case) to proclaim a Jihad, or Holy War, against the Government forces.

The call to arms was eagerly answered by many of the tribesmen, and large-scale operations became necessary, lasting twelve months from November, 1936, before a semblance of peace could be restored. By the end of 1937 most of the hostile tribes had

submitted and given guarantees of future good behaviour, but in the background still lurked the evil genius of all the troubles. The Faqir of Ipi (or just "Ipi" to the troops) had managed to escape, and was to remain at large throughout the ten remaining years of our occupation, and beyond. Flitting from one safe and virtually inaccessible cave area to another, along the Afghan border, he continued to wage his implacable private war. His holy standard attracted scores, and at times hundreds, of irreconcilable outlaws and adventurers, all pledged to carry on the fight. For the next ten years Ipi's gangsters were to be constantly on the prowl, looking for an unwary detachment or a chance to harass a column. There was to be no return of the peaceful years before 1936, when small parties or individuals could freely wander round the country, and the roads needed only khassadars (or tribal police) for a form of token protection.

These changed conditions were not immediately evident to the 2nd Battalion, arriving in the depth of winter when the Razmak plateau was covered with a thick blanket of snow. During these snowy months the local tribesmen usually kept to their homes or joined the winter migration to the Plains. During the first two months, therefore, the Battalion was peacefully initiated into the local mysteries of R.P. (Road Protection) and column duties, and had to survive the searching tests imposed on all "new boys" before being considered "fit for Column."

The Brigade was lucky in its leader and teacher, a Frontier soldier of wide experience. Brigadier (later Major-General) H. V. Lewis was not satisfied with anything but a complete mastery of every tactical and administrative detail of the game, and Razcol was a happy team in which everyone knew his part.

Garrison life at Razmak was dominated, in those days, by the two recurring tasks already mentioned—Columns and Road Protection or R.P. (later to be called R.O.D. or Road Open Day), and these terms call for some explanation before we proceed with our story.

Columns deserve mention first, as they formed the more active, and often exciting, interludes in Razmak routine. These were the frequent, usually monthly, excursions by Razcol, the mobile striking force, which consisted of four out of the six battalions in Razmak (one British, three Indian and two Gurkha), together with Mountain Gunners, Sappers and others. These columns served to show the flag over a wide area, and also to counteract that wire-bound feeling which troops were apt to acquire when

cooped up for too long in semi-siege conditions. Columns sometimes developed, as we shall see, into more serious operations, but more often they provided merely a welcome change of air and scenery.

“ Column Nights ” or the homecomings of Razcol, were always occasions for revelry at the club and free rum at company nautches. Such nights were only excelled on a traditional “ shield-hanging ” party, when an outgoing unit was At Home on its last night, to re-hang its shield, emblazoned with its complete record of service in Razmak, on the walls of the club.

It is noteworthy that on the 1st Gurkhas' shield the only missing years had so far been 1923/24 and 1934 to 1937. But, looking ahead, we shall find that in the last ten years of the occupation, ending in 1947, only 1944 will be missing—a record unapproached by any other regiment. (These shields were removed, in 1947, to the Pakistan Military Academy for permanent record.)

We shall, in fact, find all the other Battalions of the Regiment coming to Waziristan in turn, and all but the 4th Battalion based on Razmak itself. Razmak was, indeed, as suggested earlier, to prove more of a permanent home for the Regiment than Dharmasala itself. Now that the North-West Frontier has become out of bounds for Gurkhas, and columns and R.O.D. are almost forgotten mysteries (even to the new Pakistan Army), we need no excuse for recalling, at some length, these features of garrison life at Razmak. We shall shortly follow the 2nd Battalion on the war-path with Razcol, but first we shall give some impressions of R.P.—the most frequent task of all and a familiar one to many old 1st Gurkhas.

R.P. and R.O.D. were the terms used to describe the twice- and sometimes thrice-weekly process of opening the seventy-mile road from Bannu for the passage of motor convoys. This process demanded the deployment of two battalions and attached troops from Razmak, in addition to five or six other battalions from various camps or posts along the route. It was an expensive and wearisome routine, and after the withdrawal of most of the Field Force troops at the end of 1937 an extra brigade group had to be retained, both to assist in this task and to form another striking force when required. From Razmak the R.P. troops had to cover a seven-mile sector, including the Narai, the 7,000-foot pass at the highest point on the road.

East of the Narai and 1,000 feet above it towered Alexandra Ridge, crowned with its post, a kind of miniature crusaders' castle,

and held by a company from the Razmak garrison. This was claimed at the time to be the highest permanently occupied "outpost of Empire." On Road Open Days the garrison sallied forth to control the heights and gain touch, near Piquet 80 on the north, with R.P. troops climbing up from Razani. The eastern flank of the Narai would thus be secured before the Razmak R.P. troops arrived.

It was the duty of the two battalions from Razmak, accompanied by a mountain battery (and often by armoured cars and light tanks) to secure both flanks of the route, and of these the eastern was the most dangerous. There a number of prominent foothills, or under-features, had to be piqueted in turn up to a mile or so short of the Narai, when the road became dominated by the southern extension of Alexandra Ridge, and piquet positions known as Dun and Das had to be occupied on the crest itself. (After Colonel Dundas of 1/3rd Gurkhas, first to occupy these posts and Alexandra Ridge itself, in the advance to Razmak, early in 1923.) These were special danger spots where steep reverse slopes and thick scrub afforded a choice of hidden approaches which were all too often made use of by hostile gangs or snipers. Extensive scrub-clearing later reduced but never eliminated these dangers.

The western flank was more open, but the undulations of the plateau were deceptive. Several ravines running down from the Shuidar massif needed careful watching as they formed natural communication trenches, particularly near Gaj Piquet, where incidents were not uncommon.

The procedure for R.P. piqueting was similar to the sector system usually adopted on columns, whereby the battalion detailed as advanced guard, 1st Echelon, piqueted until expended (except for a small reserve), when the 2nd Echelon passed through. From the nature of the country it was difficult, if not impossible, to vary the piquet sites or the routes to and from them. The same time-honoured features or prominent hilltops had to be occupied on each occasion (*as marked on Map 37, facing page 302*), and much skill and initiative was demanded of all platoon leaders, with the added backing, when trouble arose, of instant supporting fire or counter-attack from their friends below.

Some idea of a junior leader's responsibilities may be gained by the fact that the official pamphlet "Platoon Leading in Frontier Warfare" listed forty-one "common mistakes" liable to be made by a route Piquet Commander, and any one of these

might spell disaster! R.O.Ds. (and columns) therefore provided splendid tests for G.Os., N.C.Os. and "Umedwars" (would-be leaders), and it is a striking fact that all those of the 2nd Battalion who gained gallantry awards, or were otherwise prominent in the years 1938-40, proved themselves again against the Japanese, both in action and in captivity.

In those days the platoon had to rely on its Vickers-Berthier L.M.G. and a few discharger cups for firing rifle grenades to supply its own covering fire, as distinct from the supporting fire of the battalion M.M.Gs. (Vickers guns) and the mountain guns. The mortars (two-inch for the platoon and three-inch for the battalion) did not appear until some years later, and likewise the home-pattern L.M.G., the Bren, and its armoured carrier. Unit transport also remained on a pack-mule basis until units joined their war divisions later, when we shall find that sturdy animal, the mule, coming into its own once more on the Burma front (and also in Italy). The mules were often the "oldest soldiers" of all, as they were liable to be handed over on relief like station stores, so many of them had to serve a life sentence in Razmak until they were cast as "old and worn out."

But we left the R.P. troops getting into position, and there they were likely to remain for at least six or seven hours while the motor convoys surged by. It was a long and anxious wait for those on the hilltops, who must be ready for instant action, but most days passed peacefully enough except for the occasional cracks from a sniper. The favourite spots for these sportsmen were along the main eastern wall of the valley where the thickly wooded spurs and ravines afforded ideal hides.

Some snipers had their pet areas, and pet names too, such as "Bakshi Bill," who specialized round the Camp Piquet of that name. He could seldom resist a crack at a bunch of mules or the red flag nearing home, and on other occasions he would liven up a game of football outside the camp perimeter. He or his heirs and successors remained to take on changing targets until these vanished for good at the end of 1947. But snipers and gangs alike usually reserved their efforts for the more promising chances offered during the withdrawal.

Headquarters' parties and reserves usually had a less exacting wait than the piquets, and in the intervals of planning or patrolling they established their messes (usually at Gaj Piquet for 1st Echelon, and Crocus Piquet for 2nd Echelon), which often became social centres for passers-by or visitors.

As the long day wore on, many eyes, including the tribesmen's, turned towards the Narai, watching for the appearance of the last red-flagged lorry. This was the signal to start the homeward rush, and often the signal, too, for the tribesmen to get busy. The time might be 3 p.m., or later if breakdowns had delayed the convoy, and then the last troops might not reach camp until after dark. Sometimes visitors from afar or new arrivals at Razmak would come out to study the conduct of the withdrawal. Most of them were keen to see the rear-guard red flag in action—the focus of action and interest—and seldom realized that once this started it moved in bounds at top speed.

Bounds often became quarter-mile sprints, especially if snipers were active, so the wise onlookers quickly took to their cars for a less hurried view or a better perspective from farther back. The impression most of them gained was of an evening rush hour in London, with a stampede of mules thrown in. "Does this ever sort itself out?" they would ask. It did—as a rule. If they watched carefully they would see groups of piquets signalled down from near the red flag, or by the flag itself, from one bound after another, and piquet troops themselves rushing full speed downhill, in scattered lines, to converge on the red flag farther back.

In time, spectators might also distinguish the different components of the battalion and mountain battery: some moving to successive "lay-backs" (rear positions) to go to ground there; others, with mule-borne M.M.Gs. or guns, urging their animals into a canter to reach their next action stations, and it was as well not to stand in their way.

The surge of men and animals might appear chaotic, but was soon seen to be planned and purposeful. At any stage a piquet in trouble could rely on instant support by fire and, if necessary, quick reinforcement from below. More piquets had trouble at Dun and Das than anywhere else, for reasons already outlined, and it was always a relief to see these hills safely cleared. Disengaging a closely pressed piquet and removing its casualties often meant a half-hour's headache for the commanders concerned, but usually in half the time taken on the outward trip the last of the R.P. troops would be filing into camp. This rush back might resemble a race for home, but woe betide those who neglected any precautions, and the setting up of records was never encouraged.

Such might be the pattern of a typical Razmak R.O.D. in the summer of 1938 or 1939—not always an incident, but rarely all

quiet. This pattern changed little up to 1947, and many old stagers must remember tramping or doubling along this familiar sector times without number, often enough as targets. Shortly we shall come to another beaten track, or a favourite column route, leading from Gardai northward to Datta Khel, which became almost as familiar to all five Battalions in turn.

In winter, conditions were different, with few tribesmen about, and then R.P. became largely a matter of snow clearing. Troops would flounder up to the Narai, where the deepest snowdrifts usually lay, and there enjoy intervals of shovelling (helped by snow ploughs) and free-for-all snow fights. It was in such occupations and occasional climbs to the snowy hill-tops, like "Bare Patch," that the 2nd Battalion prepared itself for the opening of the "shooting season" in 1938. This came early enough that year, and on 13th March the Battalion M.M.Gs. came into action for the first time during a brigade exercise near Mamu Sar, north-west of Razmak, but the enemy gang kept its distance.

Two days before this, Lieutenant-Colonel E. C. Mockler had departed on leave, pending retirement, and had handed over command to Lieutenant-Colonel E. V. R. Bellers. Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel D. D. Gracey, of 1st Battalion, was appointed Second-in-Command, but on paper only, and shortly afterwards got command of the 2/3rd Q.A.O. Gurkha Rifles. We shall hear more of General Sir Douglas Gracey, as he became, in later chapters, when we shall find him as a divisional commander in Burma with three Battalions of the Regiment under his command for a time.

From mid-March onwards, R.P. troops began to claim the attentions of one or more hostile gangs, or of casual snipers. On 30th May the Battalion set off with Razcol on a column which soon developed into something like a minor war. The Commanding Officer's June "Newsletter" continues the story:

"There was persistent sniping of camp piquets at the first camp near the Narai, and news came through that Ipi's lashkar, hitherto somewhat nebulous and inactive, had swarmed south from around Datta Khel and over the Lwargi Narai, burning Khassadar Posts on the way. Next day at Razani we heard that the 3rd Brigade were moving up from Damdil to form with Razcol the Wazirdist Column, for a combined advance northward on 2nd June.

"There was more sniping during the march to and at Razani, and

we had one man hit by a long-range volley which also hit several mules.

“On 2nd June the 3rd Brigade led off from Gardai with the idea of opening the road to Mami Rogha for Razcol to go through and engage the lashkar. 3rd Brigade immediately met strong advance elements of this lashkar on the heights flanking the route, and on a day of thick dust haze, which hampered both artillery and air, found themselves used up a mile short of Mami Rogha, having lost 8 killed and 25 wounded. When we passed through about midday we found the enemy more or less on the run. Razcol established camp near Mami Rogha that night under persistent sniping from the hills around. We had one man and several animals hit, but far worse than the sniping was the enemy's cutting of the water channel above the village. We found ourselves with only the liquid we had carried in, but our reserve pakhals (tanks, mule) were still intact, thanks to our water discipline. The animals were worse off, having already been thirty-six hours without water, due to the cutting of the Razani pipeline the day before. British soldiers wandered thirstily around, offering a rupee for a mug of water, having unwisely drunk all they had during the march.

“Next day we supported the Green Howards and 4/8th Punjab advancing up-stream to restore the water channel and piquet its source. They lost 1 killed and 4 wounded between them, but we had no casualties, and the water was at last flowing by midday.

“On the 4th the 3rd Brigade, which had returned to Gardai on the 2nd, joined us at Mami Rogha for a combined advance over the Lwargi Narai next day. The lashkar there was reported to be still 300-400 strong, but when we led off at dawn, as leading battalion on the right flank, we had little trouble in the first two miles.

“Then we ran into opposition and had to stage a set-piece attack on a prominent hill, which was quickly cleared, thanks to close M.M.G. support and well-burst shrapnel. For his leadership then and later, Subedar Premsing Rana was awarded an I.O.M. (2nd Class).

“We repeated the operation on the 6th, without opposition, to allow 3rd Brigade put a lorry column into the Scouts' post at Datta Khel. The five nights spent at Mami Rogha were all disturbed by constant attacks on piquets and by showers of Very lights and bombs. Razcol then moved back to Gardai on the 7th

to spend a week there doing R.P. on alternate days, while 3rd Brigade completed the building of a new Scouts' post at the Lwargi Narai.

“The ‘war’ seemed to be over when we moved up to Razani on the 13th, but on the following night an enemy lashkar of 500, with two of Ipi’s home-made guns, carried out a concentrated fire attack on the 3rd Brigade camp at Mami Rogha. The water supply there was again cut, and the 3rd Brigade had some close fighting on the hills to the west on the 16th, while Razcol moved up to join them. On the 17th we went over the same ground and found ample and gory evidence of the heavy casualties inflicted by the 3rd Brigade the day before. The Lwargi Post was completed and garrisoned by the 17th, so next day both Brigades withdrew.

“The 2nd Battalion was left behind as rear guard, with fifteen camp piquets of eight different units to withdraw and three miles of route to cover to the 3rd Brigade sector in rear.

“Our task was complicated by an enforced delay of three hours, after everyone else had left, awaiting a second lorry trip to lift twenty tons of bhoosa (or baled hay) omitted in 3rd Brigade’s calculations. The enemy soon started closing in, and many of the piquets became engaged, two of them reporting at least sixty enemy collecting near them. There were some anxious moments when we started, but the gunners were, as always, quickly on the mark, and the enemy soon realized that vacated piquet sites were death traps.

“Rear parties came in for several uncomfortable fusillades, in one of which Jemadar Indarbahadur Thapa was wounded but carried on and skilfully extricated his platoon, to earn an immediate I.D.S.M.

“It was with relief that we finally pulled down the 28th piquet and closed behind the 3rd Brigade rear guard, being met by the officiating Razcol Commander [Colonel “Tiger” Murray-Lyon of 4th Gurkhas, later to have the Battalion in his 11th Division in Malaya], who congratulated the Battalion on getting away so well under the added difficulties of the delayed start. We returned to Razmak on 19th June, suffering one more casualty from sniping at Razani, making our column casualties one G.O.R. died of wounds and one G.O. and two G.O.Rs. wounded. Reliable reports put the enemy losses at fifty killed in the first advance and a similar number later, with many more seriously wounded and removed, probably to die. Ipi’s lashkar had paid a heavy

price, and most of the survivors dispersed to lick their wounds---but not for long.”

Three weeks later Razcol was again on the war-path, joining the 3rd Brigade to form a combined force known as “Wastrike” for operations in the Tochi Valley. The march via Gardai, Mami Rogha and over the Lwargi to Degan met only casual sniping this time, but Ipi was known to have assembled another lashkar farther north at Kharre, one of his favourite hide-outs close to the Afghan border.

At Degan on 12th July commanding officers were told of the Force Commander’s intention to strike at Ipi’s lair at Kharre, but news soon came in that Ipi himself had already slipped away.

Degan camp came in for some heavy sniping, but the tribesmen kept their distance during Wastrike’s advance on the 13th, first up the open Tochi Valley and then northwards towards the foothills near Wuzhgai. There were a few casualties among men and animals from buried bombs, and the troops suffered much from heat exhaustion as they toiled across a barren waste to reach Wastrike’s camp under the outer escarpment of the foothills.

Battalion order groups assembled that evening on the cliff top, where piquets were being painfully established under the attentions of snipers, Captain Ainslie of the Green Howards being killed on the way up.

Razcol Commander indicated Mazdak Punga massif, behind which Kharre was said to lie, as the Battalion’s main objective, but this could be distinguished only as a vague lump with vast spurs and under-features falling away below the line of the foothills in front.

THE ACTION AT KHARRE

(*Map 3, Panorama, page 39, and Map 4, page 43*)

The declared objects of Wastrike’s operations on 14th July were: (1) to defeat Ipi’s lashkar, still reported to be in the Kharre area; (2) to secure ground from which the Tochi Scouts could raid Ipi’s own headquarters; and (3) to destroy any supplies or stores found in cave areas.

Information was vague. It was known that Ipi had fled, but the location of Kharre was not exactly known, and it had to be admitted later that the term “Kharre” merely described a mountainous area. The advance was to be on a two-brigade frontage with Razcol left and 3rd Brigade right, and perhaps to

add interest to the operations, two possible locations of Kharre were given, one for each Brigade. That on Razcol's front was described as being somewhere south-east of Kund Sar; that on the 3rd Brigade front was given vaguely as east of the Buzoma Narai. Each Brigade was given eight Platoons of Tochi Scouts for the raid, or choice of raids, contemplated.

The maps showed little more than the outlines of mountain masses, and for the 2nd Battalion was reserved the traditional fate of the British Army—to attack uphill at dawn along the junction of two map sheets.

Razcol on the left was divided into two portions:

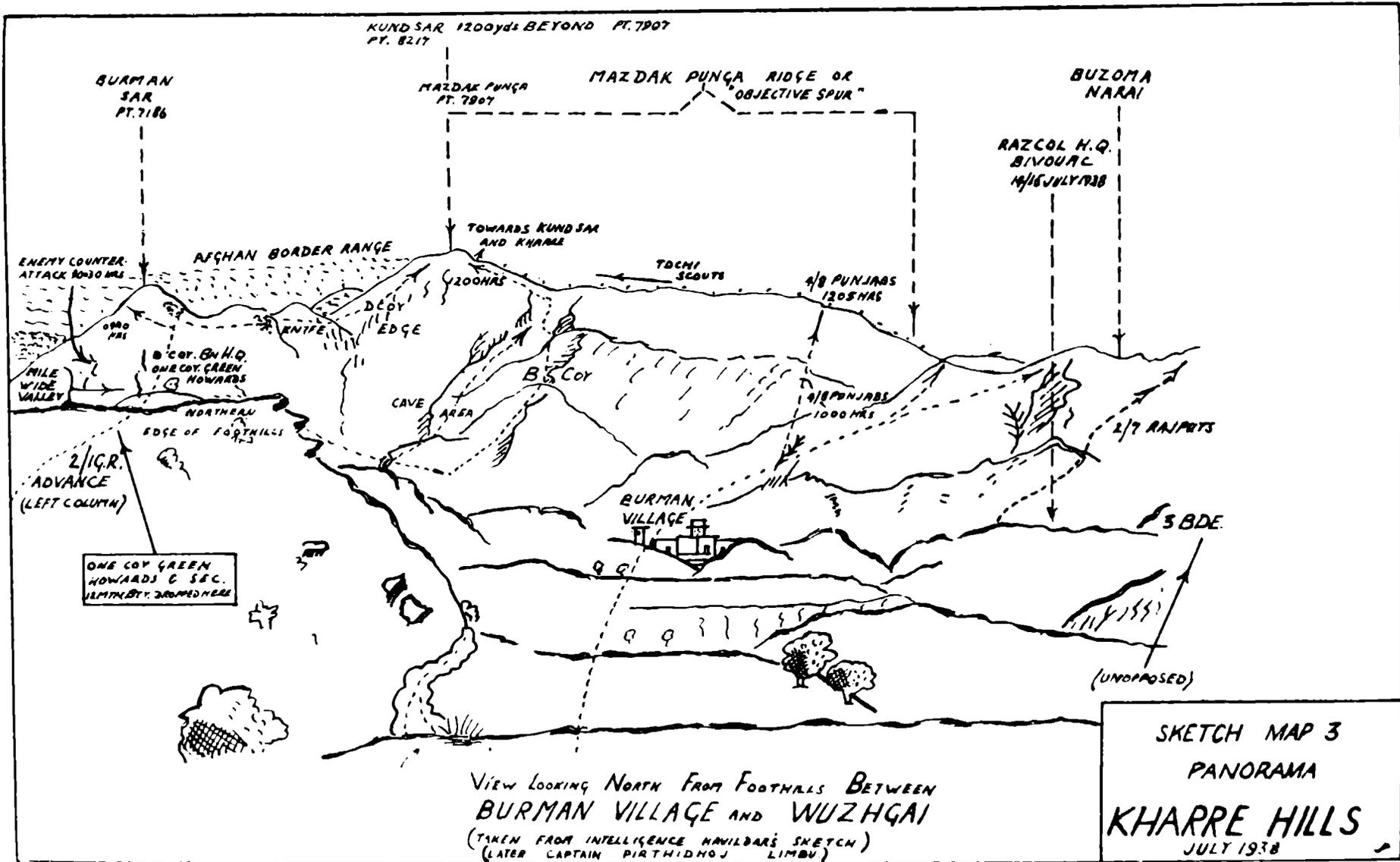
- (1) *The Left Column*, consisting of 2/1st G.R., two companies of 2nd Green Howards (2nd G.H. in short), 12 Mountain Battery, Signals and medical parties, all under Lieutenant-Colonel E. V. R. Bellers;
- (2) *The Right Column*, or the rest of Razcol (including 2nd Rajput and 4/8th Punjab), which was to advance in the centre and capture the lower half of Mazdak Punga ridge or "objective spur" and the Buzoma Narai.

The Left Column's tasks were to capture in turn Burman Sar (Pt. 7186) and Mazdak Punga peak (Pt. 7907), then to exploit far enough forward for the Scouts to find and raid the nebulous Kharre. It was also to screen the left flank against any enemy interference from the west.

Starting at 5 a.m., 2/1st G.R., at the head of the Left Column, cleared the foothills and drove off an enemy gang near the northern edge of them by 6.30 a.m. The main objectives then came clearly into view for the first time and, in the words of Wastrike's report, "the formidable nature of the task at once became apparent."

Beyond a mile-wide open valley the slopes of the Mazdak range reared up steeply 3,000 feet to the Punga, a broad, open summit. East of this a long hog-back ridge dropped away to the Buzoma Narai—"objective spur" for the Right Column. South-west of the Punga, a knife-edge ridge dipped sharply, to rise again to Burman Sar, which dominated the southern approach over the valley floor.

The first company of 2nd G.H. was dropped at the lip of the foothills, with a section of 12 Mountain Battery to cover the next move and protect the left flank. The advance then continued with "D" Company (Major J. L. F. O'Ferrall) directed on Burman, and "B" Company (Lieutenant G. E. C. Newland)



KUND SAR 1200yds BEYOND PT. 7907
PT. 8217

BURMAN SAR
PT. 7186

MAZDAK PUNÇA
PT. 7907

MAZDAK PUNÇA RIDGE OR
"OBJECTIVE SPUR"

BUZOMA
NARAI

RAZCOL H.Q.
BIVOUC
14/15 JULY 1938

ENEMY COUNTER-
ATTACK 30-30 HRS

AFGHAN BORDER RANGE

TOWARDS KUND SAR
AND KHARRE

TACHI SCOUTS

4/8 PUNJABS
120th NAs

MILE
WIDE
VALLEY

B COY. BN HQ.
ONE COY. GREEN
HOWARDS

NORTHERN
EDGE OF FOOTHILLS

2/1 G.R.
ADVANCE
(LEFT COLUMN)

ONE COY GREEN
HOWARDS C SEC.
15 MIN BY DROPPED HERE

CAVE
AREA

B COY

4/8 PUNJABS
1000 HRS

2/7 RAJPUTS

BURMAN
VILLAGE

5 BDE

(UNOPPOSED)

SKETCH MAP 3
PANORAMA
KHARRE HILLS
JULY 1938

VIEW LOOKING NORTH FROM FOOTHILLS BETWEEN
BURMAN VILLAGE AND WUZHGAI
(TAKEN FROM INTELLIGENCE NAVILDAR'S SKETCH)
(LATER CAPTAIN PIRTHIDHOJ LIMBU)

straight on Mazdak, but with orders to defer its final assault until Burman was captured.

“ D ” Company, with two forward platoons of M.M.Gs., made good progress despite considerable fire from its left and stiffening opposition near the summit, which was taken by 9.40 a.m. The enemy was soon found to be in strength both on the western rocky shoulders and lower ravines of the hill, and also in the tangled wooden ridges to the north and north-west.

The main body of the Left Column, following behind “ D ” Company, became involved in a bold enemy counter-attack from the west. The leading platoon of the second Green Howards company came under a sudden burst of heavy fire from a hidden gang and lost three killed and three wounded in a few minutes. The whole company became pinned in a fire fight until relieved by an encircling movement from above by “ A ” Company, 2/1st G.R.

Two B.O.Rs. of 2nd G.H. were awarded M.Ms. for their gallantry in this encounter. Helped by “ A ” Company's sweep, which took its toll at the cost of one man wounded, the Column closed up on Burman Sar.

Meanwhile “ B ” Company had moved up the lower slopes of Mazdak ridge and had flushed the occupants of an extended cave area which included a group of well-stocked store-rooms containing large dumps of rations and both gun and small-arms ammunition. These caves, some of which opened on to the banks of a sparkling stream, must have provided a pleasant summer base for Ipi's Q.M. staff, and maybe for Ipi himself.

“ B ” Company, resisting the urge to plunge into the tempting pools, started destroying the dumps, but had to desist when Burman Sar was taken, in order to resume its own advance.

On Burman Sar “ A ” Company extended the ground won to include the west shoulder, and relieved “ D ” Company, which moved off at noon to support “ B ” Company, then assaulting the crest of Mazdak ridge, half a mile east of the Punga.

The plan had been to use the second Green Howards company to form a secure base on Burman, but this arrived too weak and exhausted (with one platoon lost in casualties and stretcher parties), so Battalion H.Q. and “ A ” Company remained to help consolidate this vital objective.

The enemy were clearly in considerable strength to the west and north-west of Burman and they made frequent efforts to close in. The summit was continuously raked from sangared positions

at short range, and had to be made secure against a probable overnight stay, with a perimeter large enough to hold the unit and artillery mules.

" B " Company cleared Mazdak Punga soon after noon and started to exploit north towards Kund Sar, but was stubbornly opposed by enemy parties strongly posted on ridge after ridge to the north and also on flanking features.

The map proved most misleading here and did not reveal the rugged nature of the ground, which broke up into serrated scrubby ridges and precipitous ravines overlooked by Kund Sar and features on both flanks. (*Map 4*).

" B " Company had gained about 300 yards by 1.30 p.m., when Major O'Ferrall arrived with " D " Company and took over command on Mazdak. He at once deployed two platoons of " D " Company for a combined advance which made further progress, and heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy in close fighting. But the main trouble came from strong positions on both flanks, and at 2.30 Major O'Ferrall asked the Scouts to join in an effort to widen the front and gain ground from which their raid could be launched. The Scouts, who had arrived, via " objective spur," soon after noon, had been straining at the leash and dashed eagerly into the fray.

The enemy clung stubbornly to ridge after ridge, losing heavily in the process, but there was always another ahead and always more on the flanks. The front was widened and extended, but the route to the vaguely supposed Kharre valley (south-east of Kund Sar) remained dominated by the enemy on that flank.

Lieutenant Sanders and his Scouts co-operated nobly with Lieutenant Newland and his forward troops, probing here, there and everywhere and helping to do good execution. The enemy were bolder than usual and offered good targets, but ammunition began to run out, one platoon of " D " Company being reinforced only just in time by a party of Scouts.

The advance was therefore halted until more ammunition came up, and water was also demanded. The forward troops had then (3 p.m.) been on the move and in action for ten hours, had covered five rugged miles, and climbed over 3,000 feet. Many were suffering from exhaustion and thirst.

Strenuous efforts had been made to get mules, with M.M.Gs., ammunition and water, forward to Mazdak Punga. S.M. Ajabsing Thapa and his mule party had managed to urge and drag the unit mules up to Burman Sar by 2 p.m., losing only two in the process,

but the knife-edge forward proved impossible. The mountain guns with their bigger loads could not reach Burman, and the forward section had to come into action at the foot of the hill. M.M.Gs. had, meanwhile, been manhandled along the knife-edge to engage enemy positions west of Mazdak Punga.

Fortunately, 4/8th Punjab (under Lieutenant-Colonel E. Wood) found an easy route along "objective spur" and sent a rifle company and M.M.G. Platoon, with much-needed ammunition but no water, to Major O'Ferrall's help. These, and a 2nd Rajput Company which arrived later, were used to secure Mazdak Punga itself.

Around Burman the enemy seemed to have plenty of ammunition (from their near-by "arsenal") and they made frequent efforts to probe our positions. One bold gang was successfully engaged by a sally on the part of "A" Company and was heavily punished, but the close sniping continued.

Eastward, Razcol Right Column had occupied the Buzoma Narai and the eastern half of Mazdak ridge by midday. 3rd Brigade, having met no enemy and found no Kharre, were ordered to send their eight platoons of Tochi Scouts to Mazdak Punga, with a view to the whole sixteen platoons raiding the valley south-east of Kund Sar, where Kharre might still be found.

The wild-goose chase after Kharre continued, therefore, and at 4 p.m. the troops and Scouts beyond Mazdak Punga made another concerted advance supported by the garrison on the Punga and by guns and M.M.Gs. near Burman directed on the western features of Kund Sar. Further ground was gained until a 200-foot-deep ravine blocked further progress just short of Kund Sar.

The remaining eight platoons of Tochi Scouts had arrived soon after 3.30 p.m., but the Commandant quickly decided that the proposed raid "was not feasible owing to the impossible nature of the ground." He pointed out that even if Kund Sar could be occupied the descent to the nullah concerned south-east of it was precipitous and thickly wooded, and on the far side was a sheer cliff from which snipers could take a heavy toll.

Razcol, therefore, cancelled the raid and informed Left Column that Wastrike would laager for the night in the area already occupied, between Buzoma Narai and Burman village. 2/1st G.R. were given the choice of remaining in two hill-top laagers, collecting on Burman, or withdrawing to the main Wastrike laager—and chose the first.

Major O'Ferrall was directed to laager the two forward companies on Mazdak Punga but to release the two companies sent up by Razcol and half the Tochi Scouts. The disengagement of the foremost platoons under pressure might well have proved expensive without the splendid help afforded by Lieutenant Sanders and his Scouts, who had, indeed, taken a lion's share in the fighting beyond Mazdak.

By 6 p.m. Major O'Ferrall had successfully closed his companies into a laager on the summit of Mazdak Punga, where mules with water and blankets had already arrived via "objective spur."

The enemy tried to close in towards sunset, and sniping increased, probably in confident expectation of an evening withdrawal, but most of them drew off when they saw the troops were standing fast. The men were tired, but their tails were well up despite their gruelling and thirsty day of almost continuous scrapping. They knew they had inflicted ten to one in casualties.

There was no wire for obstacles, and ample dead ground near the laagers, so no precautions were relaxed that night. Perimeters were strongly manned and posts kept on the alert by frequent officers' rounds, but the enemy contented themselves with casual sniping and occasional probing by bolder parties.

During the night Razcol issued orders for a withdrawal to Wuzhgai next morning. To assist the Left Column the Tochi Scouts, with two companies 4/8th Punjab, were to move up to Mazdak Punga, the Scouts then doing a circular sweep down through Burman Sar. However, it was soon clear next morning that the enemy had had enough, and only a few hardier spirits remained to enjoy some sniping. At midday the whole of Wastrike was back in Wuzhgai Camp without further trouble or casualties.

The rest of the cave-area dumps found by "B" Company were destroyed before withdrawal and some trophies were brought away for the Mess, including some of Ipi's artillery shells. The 2nd Battalion were all convinced that this was Ipi's main dump, whether or not he also enjoyed another summer retreat higher up.

Wastrike's report summed up the results of the day's operations as follows:

"Although Ipi's actual H.Q. had not been reached, Kharre, which is an area, had been penetrated and several dumps destroyed." (It then described "B" Company's find.) "Another ration dump near Burman village was also destroyed. The lashkar had been so severely handled that no attempt was made to attack troops in their bivouacs, and Wastrike withdrew to Wuzhgai

unharmd. The lashkar suffered 100 killed as a conservative estimate, whilst our casualties were only 3 B.O.Rs. and 5 I.O.Rs. killed, 3 B.O.Rs. and 6 I.O.Rs. wounded."

Most of the enemy casualties were inflicted by Left Column and the Tochi Scouts, and of our own casualties all but one I.O.R. wounded occurred in 2/1st G.R. or Green Howards attached.

The following immediate awards were made for gallant leading on 14th July: M.C.—Lieutenant G. E. C. Newland (also Lieutenant Sanders of Tochi Scouts); I.O.M.—Naik Amarbahadur Gurung, "B" Company (killed near Kund Sar). (Further awards and "mentions" were gazetted later, as will be recorded, and some of these were earned at Kharre.)

The Left Column had certainly played a major part in the Kharre operation, and we can find no records of any other troops having spent a night in two hill-top laagers at nearly 8,000 feet after an all-day engagement. Razcol got back to Razmak on 19th July without further trouble except for casual sniping and the usual nuisance of buried bombs which caused some casualties to animals.

The rest of July and August passed fairly peacefully with normal R.P. duties at Razmak, livened up by occasional sniping. Early in September Razcol marched via Kaniguram to join hands with Wanacol at Torwam, but the 2nd Battalion remained in Razmak. This move seemed to stir up a sudden wave of activity by numerous hostile gangs which not only opposed Razcol but became aggressive around Razmak and Razani.

On 10th September the Battalion, while on R.P., had a sharp engagement with a large gang at Dun Piquet and lost one killed and two wounded, but not without retaliation.

At the end of September the Battalion accompanied Razcol in a march over the familiar route through Mami Rogha and over the Lwargi Narai to Datta Khel. Only a few snipers were about, but one unfortunate G.O.R. died of snake-bite at Datta Khel Camp. From there Razcol made a surprise move due south into a vast wooded and precipitous valley north-west of Shuidar peak, a regular sniper's paradise. A large gang of about eighty hostiles was engaged here, and reinforcements were expected to flock in from Ipi's new H.Q. at Ghumbakai, only twenty miles to the west.

The tribesmen held back, however, probably hoping that Razcol would be rash enough to take the direct route back to Razmak through the Spin Kamar gorges. Camp was established at Murki Karez on 2nd October, with piquets on crags whose

names gave some idea of the ground: "Tooth" and "Nail," "Castle," "Top Hat" and "Everest." Next day the Battalion did a reconnaissance with 2/4th G.R. farther up the valley, but met only slight opposition. Sniping was heavy at times on both nights spent there, the 2nd Battalion having one man wounded.

On 4th October Razcol withdrew the way it came, and the Battalion had the awkward task of rear guard, with gangs of about forty on each flank. These closed in on each piquet as its turn came to disengage, but thanks to superb artillery support (and very often fleetness of foot) all went well.

The Battalion continued as rear guard for the whole twelve miles, first down the valley and then round the foot of the hills to the steep ascent to the Lwargi Narai. The red flag did not reach camp on the Narai until sunset, after pulling in a record number of fifty piquets. While piqueting near Mami Rogha next day, the Battalion seized a chance of hitting back at a venturesome gang, and had the satisfaction of seeing two enemy bodies left out in the open.

The Battalion casualties for this column were only two wounded in addition to the fatal snake-bite. The enemy had learnt, perhaps, to keep their distance from Razcol after their heavy losses at Kharre.

BOTH BATTALIONS IN WAZIRISTAN, 1938-39

The 1st Battalion, under Lieutenant-Colonel W. St. J. Carpendale, left Dharm sala in the middle of August, 1938, for Bannu *en route* to join 1st (Abbottabad) Brigade at Razani. Guard duties detained the Battalion for three weeks in Bannu, however, and it did not reach Razani until 9th September. The 1st Brigade had come up to relieve the 3rd Brigade, which had so often joined forces with Razcol, as additional garrison in Waziristan. There were to be no more joint operations of the 1938 pattern against Ipi, however, and the next eight months saw Razcol and the 1st Brigade column taking over the L. of C. from each other in turn, to free the other for active operations.

The two 1st Gurkha Battalions were able to exchange only hasty greetings as the 2nd Battalion passed through Razani on 29th-30th September for the Datta Khel Column already described.

As soon as Razcol had passed, the 1st Brigade moved down the road to spend three weeks at Damdil and then on to Mir Ali. While at Razani and Damdil the 1st Battalion took its turn on

R.P. duties and suffered its first casualty from sniping—one man wounded. From Mir Ali the 1st Brigade expected to move south into the Lower Khaisora Valley, where a section of the Tori Khel Wazirs still remained hostile. This operation was, however, cancelled on 23rd October in favour of less drastic methods of persuasion, including denial of tribal winter grazing-grounds. (These half-hearted measures eventually proved useless.)

The 1st Brigade then settled hopefully into winter quarters at Mir Ali, with extra comforts and tentage, while Razcol, with the 2nd Battalion, 4/8th Punjab, and 2/4th G.R., moved down to take over R.P. duties at Damdil. The 1st and 2nd Battalions then came into easier calling range of each other. Razcol R.P. duties extended upward, towards Dosalli (Tochi Scouts sector), and downward to the hills overlooking the Tochi Valley at the Nariwela Narai. Downward R.P. days thus provided occasions for exchanges of visits, or small roadside reunions, but neither then nor later did the two Battalions find an opportunity of getting together properly.

R.P. downward from Damdil presented fewer problems than those described near Razmak as the road crossed two open plains separated by a rocky ridge. Standing piquets were only necessary, therefore, near the central pass and at the far end near the Nariwela Narai, and much of the route could be patrolled by armoured cars or lorried troops. Armoured personnel vehicles were not then available, only "soft" 30-cwt. lorries, so every precaution had to be taken against surprise or ambush at close range.

In the upward R.P. sector the Khaisora Valley narrowed, immediately west of Asad Khel, and the scrub-covered slopes on the north ran down into a tangle of ravines and under-features where troops had to be particularly wary. This had been the scene of a heavy engagement in March, 1937, when R.P. troops of 1st (Abbottabad) Brigade had been involved in a large-scale enemy ambush, and lost heavily before the rest of the Brigade came out from Damdil to join battle.

Throughout November the troops were strictly limited to operations inside the Razmak road corridor in the hope that the tribesmen would gradually settle down.

Razcol remained at Damdil until early in December, when it was recalled to Razmak to prepare for a column in South Waziristan. This meant that 1st Brigade had again to distribute itself along the Razmak road, and by 9th December it had 2/6th G.R. in Damdil, 1/1st G.R. in Razani, and its H.Q. and 1/5th G.R. in Razmak.

On the same day Razcol, including 2/1st G.R. under Major J. L. F. O'Ferrall, set out on what became known as the Kerama Column. The 2nd Battalion took over advanced guard near Tauda China, and ran into opposition four miles short of camp at Bibezeai. All piquets got away without loss, but the last of them did not reach camp until nightfall. One camp piquet had to be established after dark, and was attacked in the early hours of 10th December. Three bombs were thrown into the sangar, of which two were returned but the third exploded, wounding four men. O.C. No. 2 Platoon, Jemadar Ransing Thapa, and Rifleman (Signaller) No. 6299 Tekbahadur Gurung both did gallant work and inflicted many casualties on the enemy.

On 10th December the Battalion did advanced guard, 2nd Echelon, on a long march through difficult country, including the Barari Tangi, and had two men wounded in a route piquet west of Piazza Camp. Sorarogha was reached only just before dark. Next day the 2nd Battalion led off as advanced guard, 1st Echelon, and with the help of the South Waziristan Scouts had piqueted through the notorious Ahnai Tangi as far as Kotkai village by 10.30 a.m. All but the rear guard had passed through to Kotkai when sniping broke out south of the Ahnai Tangi and the enemy appeared in force on the hills above Zeriwam village. The rear guard, 2/4th G.R., had a difficult time withdrawing some of the piquets, and Jemadar Ransing Thapa and his Signaller, Tekbahadur Gurung, again distinguished themselves. Their No. 9 route piquet was almost surrounded, and in their first attempt to withdraw they lost one killed and one wounded. A counter-attack by a company of 2/4th G.R. and "B" Company, 2/1st G.R., under Captain D. J. R. Moore, on either side of the piquet then relieved the situation.

Jemadar Budhilal Gurung, of "B" Company, was later awarded an I.D.S.M. for leading a charge in which he killed two tribesmen with his own revolver and captured two rifles. The bodies of nine enemy were found, and later it was confirmed that the enemy lost at least twelve killed and ten wounded in this action. "B" Company had only one man wounded. (Some of Subedar Budhilal's later exploits in Malaya are recorded in Appendix 4.)

Jemadar Ransing Thapa also earned an I.D.S.M. for his repeated gallantry, first at Bibezeai and then in this second piquet scrap.

After these losses at Zeriwam, the Mahsuds quickly came to

terms, and Razcol's return march through Manzai-Mahsud country, via Karama, to Ladha, was unopposed. The column returned to Razmak, in a snowstorm, on 20th December. The Battalion's column casualties had been one killed and eight wounded, making the total for the year 1938 nine killed and twenty wounded.

With the Mahsuds pacified for the time being, troops were at once redistributed to deal with the still-defiant Tori Khel. Units from Razmak moved down to take over L.-of-C. duties as far as Mir Ali (exclusive) while the 1st Brigade concentrated at Damdil.

The 2nd (Rawalpindi) Brigade, next for duty in Waziristan, was also brought up to operate southward from Mir Ali.

The 1st Battalion reached Damdil on 23rd December, and a few days later its new C.O., Lieutenant-Colonel J. K. Jones arrived from the 6th Gurkhas, after taking over command at Dharmsala from Lieutenant-Colonel W. St. J. Carpendale, promoted to a 1st-Grade Staff appointment at Peshawar.

The 2nd Battalion soon found itself split up, with a company at Alexandra Post, and early in January other companies went to Dosalli and Spalga, near Tal in Tochi. It had an unexciting role of garrison and R.P. duties for the next three months.

WAZIRISTAN, 1939

The 1st Brigade was subjected to persistent sniping while waiting at Damdil for its oft-postponed operation, but on 10th January it at last set off down the Khaisora Valley. Its advance via Zerpezai, Dakkai Kalai and Biche Kashkai met with minor opposition by day and some sniping by night, but there was no organized enemy lashkar in the field. In one sharp action on 14th January, Rifleman Shiamlal Bura of the 1st Battalion won an immediate I.D.S.M. for a bold and skilful stalk, culminating in a hand-to-hand struggle in which he killed at least two enemy and captured a rifle. (Rifleman Shiamlal Bura was wounded with the 2nd Battalion in Malaya three years later. The story of how he cut off his own arm, shattered by M.G. fire, with a kukri, but survived after fifteen days in the jungle, is told in Appendix 4, paragraph 6.)

The 1st Brigade finally followed the Khaisora River as far as Sein and marched back again to Damdil at the end of January. The column suffered, like Razcol earlier, from the buried-bomb nuisance, which caused a number of casualties among the animals.

One of the main objects of the operations had been to "bring

economic pressure to bear ” by camping on fields and by destroying retaining walls and water channels. This apparent vandalism did not, however, work out as savagely as it sounded. The Political officers had less trouble than usual in proving that all such property was almost invariably “ friendly owned.”

Mumps had been spreading rapidly in the 1st Battalion, so early in February it was moved to Mir Ali to take over garrison duties there. When the 1st Brigade moved out on column again, down the lower Shaktu Valley, the 1st Battalion had to remain at Mir Ali doing R.P., towards both Razmak and Biche Kashkai, at much reduced strength.

Persistent rain and deep snow on higher ground held up the Shaktu operations early in March, but the 1st Brigade eventually completed its round tour and earned its release from Waziristan after a final column from Mir Ali to Spinwam.

The 1st Battalion recovered in time to take part in this march, which was marked by continuous heavy rain and acute discomfort. There was only one redeeming feature: the enemy sniping, which added to the trials of the first night at Spinwam, was immediately checked when, to the surprise of the soldiers, permission was giving by the Political to shell the villages.

Struggling back through deep mud to Mir Ali on 31st March, the 1st Battalion entrained at Bannu on 2nd April and reached Dharmsala on the 4th.

In the eventual *Gazette*, Lieutenant-Colonel J. K. Jones and Subedar Kalamsing Gurung received Mentions in Despatches.

Life at Dharmsala can seldom have been more peaceful than during those summer months of 1939. Even the outbreak of war with Germany on 3rd September seemed to cause little stir. We shall, therefore, carry the 1st Battalion's story up to the end of that year, and that of the 2nd Battalion up to May, 1940 (when it left Waziristan), before we open a new chapter on the Second World War.

Both Battalions were reorganized in May, 1939 (as were all active Indian Army battalions) to form:

Four rifle companies, each of three platoons (instead of three companies each of four platoons);

H.Q. Company, including the Support (M.M.G.) Platoon;
and

“ T ” (Training) Company (at Dharmsala, as before).

For the dress record: in May pith hats replaced Wolseley

helmets for British officers in Review or Drill Order (under a general Indian Army Order). These pith hats, more commonly known as "Bombay bowlers," were lighter than the monstrosities of the past, called "Pig-stickers" or "Cawnpore topis," but Gurkha hats continued to be worn in the field. A few years later all forms of tropical headgear were found to be unnecessary.

The 1st Battalion had been warned, earlier in the year, that its next Frontier tour would take it to Fort Sandeman, in the Zhob Valley, in March, 1940. After the outbreak of war this move was held in abeyance, and hopes were raised of a possible move overseas—but not for long. The Zhob move was soon confirmed, and in mid-November the Battalion went to Jhelum for a month's training in mountain warfare with the 3rd Brigade. In mid-December it was back at Dharmasala, with no more exciting prospect ahead than a fresh tour of peaceful garrison duty in the Zhob.

We left the 2nd Battalion split up during January, 1939, between Razmak and the Tochi Valley. During February it was one of the two garrison battalions of Razmak, mainly engaged in the "winter sports" which R.P. duties then provided. Early in March it was moved to the L. of C. again, but concentrated this time at Damdil, with responsibility for twelve miles of road.

With the departure of the 1st Brigade garrison life at Razmak resumed its normal course. Political control in Waziristan reverted to the Governor, North-West Frontier Province, and a new era of peace was said to have started. Most of the tribes had come to terms, but Ipi's gangsters continued their activities around Razmak, not only destroying telegraph wires and bomb-planting, but also persistently sniping at R.P. troops or any unwary parties moving far from a camp perimeter.

During July and August the 2nd Battalion incurred casualties, amounting to one died of wounds and four wounded, in R.P. actions and in one very successful night operation with Razcol. The latter evoked a special congratulatory message from the District Commander in the following terms:

"The envelopment during darkness of a group of villages, situated as these were under high and difficult hills, demands clear and accurate orders, a high degree of ground sense, skilful leadership, and a very high degree of unit discipline. The fact that arrangements, both for encircling the villages and for the withdrawal, worked out without any hitch, reflects the greatest credit to all concerned, from the Brigade Commander down to the junior private."

The villages concerned lay close under the steep under-features of the Shuidar massif, about four miles north of Razmak camp. The 2nd Battalion had to occupy the farthest hills to the north and north-west, and the 1/8th G.R. those to the west and south-west.

Both Battalions closed in before dawn, and as the tanks approached through the Baluchi battalion cordon on the plain, the Gurkhas almost literally fell on a number of tribesmen belatedly rousing themselves to stand-to in positions overlooking the villages. The two 2/1st Companies, "C" under 2nd-Lieutenant W. G. Seaward, and "D" under Subedar Manikishen Newar, did some rapid execution, accounting for eight enemy and many more wounded (1/8th G.R. killed at least three more). The only casualties on our side were one man wounded in each Gurkha battalion. To crown this successful action the Scouts combed the villages and arrested thirty long-wanted bad characters. Subedar Manikishen was later awarded an I.D.S.M. for his bold company leading.

The outbreak of war had even less effect at Razmak than at Dharmsala. The 2nd Battalion eagerly awaited its relief, due in January, 1940, but had to serve an additional "sentence" of four months.

One of the few, and welcome, changes brought about by the War was a sudden influx of British officers as a result of the recall of all officers on leave and most of those who had retired on the S.U.L., or Special Unemployed List, in the years just before the War. Battalions which had long become accustomed to minimum strengths, with only six British officers, and Gurkha officers often in command of companies, were soon rejoicing in a plethora of field officers, and in company officers, too.

The Battalion itself, with all furlough men recalled, soon mustered 700, or 100 above its normal strength for Razmak. This happy state did not last long, however, as we shall see.

In October the *Gazette* for the 1938 operations appeared, with five I.D.S.Ms. for the 2nd Battalion, as well as Mentions in Despatches for the Commanding Officer, Subedar-Major, and the two recipients of immediate I.O.Ms. In addition to the awards for Jemadar Ransing Thapa and Budhilal Gurung, already mentioned, I.D.S.Ms. went to Subedar Dilbahadur Gurung, Jemadar Jasbir Thapa, and C.H.M. Jasbahadur Rana, for distinguished services at Mami Rogha and Kharre.

Next came the Shawali column, at the end of October, which

took Razcol eastward by a pack track over the Nawai Nawal and thence down into the densely wooded gorges of the Shawali Algad, a tributary of the Shaktu.

This was certainly new ground for a so-called training column, and ground, moreover, where hostile guerilla gangs could be expected to exploit their tactics to the full, with almost complete immunity from guns or M.M.Gs. There was only casual sniping on the first march to Anztalai on 24th October, but next day determined gangs were encountered on most of the wooded heights flanking the route to Shawali camp.

The 2nd Battalion, leading off as advanced guard into the thickest part of the valley, soon found it necessary to post double-platoon piquets on certain features where little help could be afforded from below. One of these strong fighting groups fought a magnificent all-day action which brought the Battalion its third I.O.M. The citation for this immediate award is worth quoting in full as a fine example of platoon leadership in this, the last of the Battalion's columns.

“ On 25th October, Havildar Hire Rana was in command of the forward platoon of No. 14 route piquet (two platoons) located on a thickly wooded spur where a party of at least 20 enemy attempted to get to close quarters throughout the morning, under close supporting fire from another enemy covering party. Havildar Hire exposed himself freely to dispose his sections and deal with each threat in turn. When the enemy attempted to rush one flank he led a section across and succeeded in shooting down two enemy within 10 yards of him.

“ When ordered to withdraw, he boldly extricated his platoon and, when half-way back to the covering platoon, led another counter-attack against a closely following enemy party, shooting down two at a few yards, and three more trying to get away.

“ Again, on 28th October, he was in command of the rearmost platoon of the rear guard, crossing an open field exposed to continuous enemy fire, when a man in his rear section was wounded. Havildar Hire personally went back, removed the casualty's rifle and equipment, and remained exposed to persistent accurate fire until the whole section reached cover. Throughout the Shawali column Havildar Hire showed marked initiative, a disregard for his own safety, and an inspiring example to all ranks.”

The second episode has anticipated events. On the 25th other piquets were also engaged and took their toll. The Baluchis had a stiff fight to secure the camp site, and two companies of 2/1st had to go forward, as soon as they were relieved from piquets, to clear the hills west of camp. The rear guard (1/8th G.R.) was not in until dusk, after being forced to counter-attack twice to disengage piquets.

On the 27th the 2nd Battalion went out to meet 2/2nd G.R., coming in to join the column from Ghariom, and clashed with a large enemy party near Waladin, losing two killed, but hit back strongly. On the 28th its task as rear guard looked like being even worse than those at Mami Rogha and Murki Karez. Enemy bands were reported to be flocking in, and most of the camp piquets were engaged during the night. The Brigade Commander considered it likely that the 2/1st would be benighted short of Anztalai and would have to fend for itself. However, Razcol seemed to surprise the enemy by a 4-a.m. start, and 1/8th G.R. occupied the first mile unopposed before daylight.

The rear guard blew up a village tower and cleared camp before the enemy really "came to" (thanks partly to Ramazan) at 8 a.m. There were anxious moments later, with some piquets hotly engaged, and one counter-attack had to be launched, but there was no serious hold-up. Every stretch of the valley was found to be enfiladed from somewhere in the woods, and the Battalion felt lucky to get away with only three men wounded. It was on one of these exposed stretches that Havildar Hire distinguished himself again. The return march to Razmak, over the Engamal Narai, was uneventful for the 2/1st, though other units were closely engaged and Major Parkin of the Sikhs won an immediate D.S.O.

During its last six months at Razmak, up to May, 1940, the Battalion took its turn of R.P. and L.-of-C. detachments, but there were no more fighting columns. Two more men were wounded on R.P. in January and one in May, making the final casualties for the whole tour 12 killed and 31 wounded. The honours awarded amounted to one M.C., three I.O.Ms., seven I.D.S.Ms. and eight Mentions, as well as a number of Army Commander's Certificates. It was a record which was unique in these years of apparent peace and, indeed, in many a major campaign as well.

The Battalion finally handed over in May, 1940, to the 2/2nd

Gurkhas, under whose command it was to pass, while retaining its identity as "A" Company, 2/1st G.R., in the last desperate battles for Singapore, a little less than two years later.

The India General Service Medal, 1936, with clasp "North-West Frontier 1937-39," was issued to all who served with the 1st and 2nd Battalions in Waziristan in 1938-39.

The October 1940 *Gazette* included Mentions for Lieutenant-Colonel E. V. R. Bellers, Havildar Hire Rana, I.O.M., and two other G.O.Rs.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

INDIA: AUTUMN, 1939, TO AUTUMN, 1941

THE first twelve months after the outbreak of war with Germany on 3rd September, 1939, brought few changes in the ordinary peaceful routine of the Regiment, as we have seen in the previous chapter.

India seemed destined to play but a minor part in the War, limited to the reinforcement of Egypt and Malaya by a few brigades. No general mobilization was ordered and no major expansion of the Indian Army seemed to be demanded. India's role in Imperial defence remained limited, as before, to internal security and defence against local aggression. The latter was clearly understood to mean the security of the North-West Frontier, with the Russian bogey in the background. Only one division was to be available for overseas. It was not until the middle of 1940, when France fell, that India's offer to expand was either accepted in London or even made possible on the score of money and munitions.

Quite apart from its expansion, the Indian Army at the outbreak of war was woefully under-armed and immobile, judged by Continental standards. Most of the infantry units were trained and equipped for tribal warfare on the North-West Frontier and still relied on mules for their battle transport. A scheme of gradual modernization was being introduced as war broke out, but even the early overseas contingents could not be fully equipped with the latest types of arms and vehicles. Those arriving in Egypt had to be largely re-equipped on arrival there. (We shall see later on how the Army in Malaya was still short of such equipment to meet the Japanese invasion at the end of 1941.)

It was thus no fault of India's that about twelve precious months were lost before expansion could begin to take shape. India was then faced with the task of producing a large army in

a hurry, and of raising a number of new divisions to be ready to take the field in the summer and autumn of 1941.

It is worth recording that by September, 1940, India had far exceeded her promised overseas contribution of one division. Then both the 4th and 5th Indian Divisions (each one brigade short) were moving up to battle: the 4th to meet Marshal Graziani's army massing on Egypt's western frontier; the 5th to engage the Italian East African Army in Abyssinia. By November, 1940, India had added two brigades to the one sent to Malaya before the outbreak of war, although the Home Government continued to minimize the Japanese threat in the Far East.

We have seen in the previous chapter how at the outbreak of war both the 1st and 2nd Battalions had been recently toughened and blooded in Frontier operations, and also how a Frontier garrison role had continued to claim them both. Whether the 1st Battalion, settling into Fort Sandeman in March, 1940, after a year "at home," or the 2nd Battalion, back at Dharmasala in May, 1940, felt more hopelessly side-tracked from the War, it would be difficult to say. We need not linger over their frustrations, then still shared by most of the Indian Army.

There was one encouraging sign in the summer of 1940—the beginning of modernization, the obvious prerequisite of overseas service. The change-over from mules to machines and the mastery of new weapons were bound to be a slow and makeshift process. Units not chosen for the early overseas contingents had to wait patiently on a priority list for instructor vacancies at Army schools. They also had to be content with dummy weapons and broken-down buses, or junk from scrap-heaps, as the first stage towards ownership of their own modern equipment.

By August, 1940, however, the 1st Battalion was well on the road, and the 2nd Battalion just setting out, to prove triumphantly that Mongolians in motors were far from being the menace that jealous outsiders' jests had so readily assumed. Johnny Gurkha, in fact, was quick to show his usual adaptability, and even to reveal a dormant mechanical mind. These qualities were soon to be taken as a matter of course, but the progress achieved was none the less remarkable. If we may look ahead, we can exemplify this in the record of the 1st Battalion which, with no more than fifteen motor drivers in August, 1940, could boast only a year later of 150 men trained in both driving and maintenance, with its own complete Light Aid Detachment.

The late summer of 1940 saw a complete change in India's war

outlook, and our two Battalions, like many others, became busy with plans for the first stage of expansion, beginning that autumn. The belated formation of new units was to be regulated by a process described as "milking," though many thought "bleeding" would have been a better term. In short, new battalions were to be built up around a nucleus, or "cream," of officers, N.C.Os. and specialists "milked" from existing units, and supplemented by a large intake of new recruits. As far as the Regiment was concerned, each Battalion had to contribute some 200 officers and men for the re-birth of the 3rd Battalion on 1st October, 1940. A further contribution of eighty men each, in this case from the 3rd Battalion as well, was to be made in March, 1941, to form the new 4th Battalion.

There can be no denying that the loss of so many of their best leaders and potential leaders in these successive "milkings" was keenly felt by the older Battalions. The leaders' places had to be filled by eager but untried youngsters who needed both time and practical experience to find their feet. Moreover, the early "milkings" were not the last. Apart from finding staff for the new Regimental Centre, formed in November, 1940, battalions had to lose more cream when the time came to mobilize for overseas. Divisional and Brigade Employment Platoons and similar extra regimental employments then took an extra toll. Many senior officers doubted the wisdom of creating units so quickly. Hog-hunting with a blunt spear, some called it, but, unfortunately, it was only too clear that the hogs would have to be hunted somehow before 1941 was out.

It is true that the raw material in the ranks was magnificent, and it was destined to bear the brunt of the heavy fighting ahead, both in Burma, as we shall see, and elsewhere. Units like the 2nd Battalion, flung into battle before the end of 1941, were those who felt the "milking" most. The 1st, 3rd and 4th Battalions, making good use of the time afforded them, had turned their youngsters into burly toughs (as one commanding officer has described them) before they went to war—the new battalions late in 1943, and the 1st early in 1945. The later campaigners also enjoyed the unbounded advantages of improved training doctrines and of massive air and ground support, all denied to the unfortunate Army in Malaya in 1941-42.

The 3rd Battalion thus came to life again at Dharmasala, after twenty years of "suspended animation," on 1st October, 1940. Its first Commandant, Lieutenant-Colonel C. M. H. Wingfield,

M.V.O., came to it from the 2nd Gurkhas, and was to train and lead it with conspicuous success until his tragic death in action in May, 1944.

Starting with its first "milkings" of 400 Gurkha ranks, as already described, recruits began to pour in, and by 18th November the authorized intake of 500 had been completed.

Meanwhile, on 15th November, the new Regimental Centre had been formed under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel G. G. Rogers, M.C. This at last brought the Regiment (and also the whole Gurkha Brigade) into line with the rest of the Indian infantry, which had long been organized with permanent training battalions. Our new Centre started with a fusion of the two Regular Battalion Training Companies, with additional staff, and it grew rapidly, as new recruits poured in, to form new training companies. Eventually it expanded to a complex organization of several thousand men, under a commandant with the rank of full Colonel. (Its growth is described in Chapter Ten.)

Dharmsala became, in fact, a true Regimental home, which was to endure beyond the War. We must digress here to record how the question of abandoning Dharmsala altogether had only recently come to a head once more.

In 1938 Army Headquarters produced a scheme for the future grouping of Gurkha regiments in three or four main centres more suitable for modern training and operational needs than some of the existing hill-top homes, like Dharmsala and Bakloh. Another reason for change lay in the high costs of maintaining garrisons in remote isolation from main railway lines, and also of rebuilding some of the aged and out-of-date barracks therein. The Tirah Lines in Dharmsala had, in fact, been left to dissolve in ruins when the 2nd Battalion left for Razmak early in 1938, and many of the barracks were found to be beyond repair when a new need arose for them at the end of 1940.

Many old soldiers, British and Gurkha alike, had been distressed at the prospect of losing the happy home which the Regiment had enjoyed for eighty years. But it was gradually brought home to everyone that the sacred Charter for retaining Dharmsala "in perpetuity" (see Appendix VII of our History, 1815-1920) would have to be surrendered in the interests of the Army as a whole and of the continued efficiency of the Regiment itself. Early in 1940 the 1st and 4th Gurkhas were asked to make their definite choice of a future home, though the scheme was to be held in abeyance until after the War. The homes under consideration

were limited to four: Abbottabad, Quetta, Dehra Dun and Shillong—all existing Gurkha homes or colonies—and our choice fell on Dehra Dun. Dharmsala was destined, however, to survive the War and the upheavals following it, as we shall see.

But we must return to the autumn of 1940.

The inrush of recruits for the Centre soon began to cause congestion in Dharmsala Cantonment, although the 2nd Battalion vacated the Bhurtpur Lines in the middle of October to join the 7th Indian Division at Wah, where we shall follow it presently. Companies of the 3rd Battalion were moved down in turn to Chari camp to make room, and by January, 1941, a suitable site was found for a battalion camp at Tanda, three and a half miles from Nagrota railway station.

The development of Chari and Tanda as permanent standing camps, as part of the steady growth of the Centre itself, will be described later, in Chapter Ten.

In January, 1941, the 3rd Battalion was warned for a spring move to Razmak, which was a remarkable tribute to its progress in a few months. On 1st April, exactly six months after it had been formed, it passed through Bannu, to reach Razmak next day.

But we must revert to the 2nd Battalion, whose move to Wah, twenty-five miles north-west of Rawalpindi, to join the 16th Brigade of the 7th Indian Division was definitely a step nearer the War. Although the Division was not yet earmarked for any definite overseas role, more advanced training became possible with other units and arms of the Service, and the issue of a score of ancient Albion lorries, relics of the First World War, added a zest to driving and maintenance.

Lieutenant-Colonel J. O. Fulton came over from the 1st Battalion to take command on 26th October, 1940 (two months after Lieutenant-Colonel E. V. R. Bellers had left for the Staff). His tenure was to be tragically cut short, on a black day for the Battalion early in 1942, as a later chapter will tell.

Having noted the formation in March, 1941, of the 4th Battalion, to which we shall return, we shall skip the unexciting months spent by the 1st and 2nd Battalions at Fort Sandeman and Wah, to bring them into closer association in April, 1941, as units in the new 6th Indian Division at Secunderabad.

This was a war division on a higher scale of modern equipment, and earmarked for service overseas after six months' intensive training.

The Battalions were soon in proud possession of new unit M.T.

vehicles, a full scale of 3-inch mortars, and Bren and “Tommy” guns, but not of anti-tank rifles. (The 2nd Battalion were never completed with the last, as we shall see.) A new Higher War Establishment was also adopted, under which the H.Q. Company was enlarged to consist of six platoons: No. 1 Signals, No. 2 Mortars, No. 3 Anti-Aircraft, No. 4 Carriers, No. 5 Pioneers, and No. 6 Administrative.

The two Battalions found themselves in different brigades a few miles apart—the 1st in the 26th Brigade at Secunderabad (with 1/19th Hyderabad Regiment and 1/9th Gurkhas); the 2nd in the 28th, all-Gurkha, Brigade (with 2/2nd and 2/9th Gurkhas) at Bolarum.

The latter was commanded by Brigadier W. St. J. Carpendale, himself a 1st Gurkha from 1913 to 1938, when he handed over command of the 1st Battalion to Lieutenant-Colonel J. K. Jones, who in turn handed on to Lieutenant-Colonel F. M. W. Crooke, M.M., in June, 1941.

The training of the 6th Division was largely devoted to desert warfare with an emphasis on mechanized movement over wide open spaces. There was no thought of Japs or jungles, which in the outcome was unfortunate for the 28th Brigade, soon destined to part company with the 6th Division and go east instead of west.

To understand how this came about, and why all eyes were on the Middle East, we must digress to outline the spring and summer events of 1941.

The conquest of Abyssinia had followed our New Year Desert victories, but in the spring the Desert Army, weakened by a vain effort to save Greece, had been forced back behind the Egyptian border. In the early summer the whole of the Near and Middle East seemed to be threatened with the fate suffered in turn by Greece and Crete. Syria, Iraq and Persia had all in turn to be rescued from pro-Axis plots.

The 8th and 10th Indian Divisions were rushed from India to help in Syria and to safeguard the overland routes, the oilfields and the pipelines in the other two countries. All these became threatened, if only remotely, when Germany invaded Russia on 22nd June.

There seemed to be no limit to British commitments in the Middle East, and on the North-West Frontier of India itself the completion of elaborate defensive systems in the Khyber Pass and elsewhere assumed a high priority. It was not until August that the Japanese presented a new peril, when they occupied

southern French Indo-China and thus came within easy sea-borne-invasion range of Malaya. India had already deployed the 9th and 11th Indian Divisions (each a brigade short) in Malaya, in addition to the original 12th Brigade in Singapore, although the Home Government continued to minimize the Far Eastern threat compared with that in the Middle East.

By August the 6th Division was in process of completing mobilization, and expected to sail for Iraq within two months, but the 28th Brigade had to be "stolen" from it to reinforce Malaya. Units of this Brigade were not told of their destination in the orders to mobilize ahead of the Division "to move overseas independent" of it, but were not long in doubt. Unit vehicles had to be driven to Bombay and there exchanged for a similar number painted to merge with jungle greenery instead of desert sands.

So the 2nd Battalion regretfully parted company with the Division whose training it had shared for five months, and sailed eastward with the 28th Brigade convoy on 23rd August. We shall take up the tale of its misfortunes in Malaya, and in captivity, in succeeding chapters.

Six weeks later the 1st Battalion sailed for Iraq with the rest of the 6th Division, and we shall follow the long trail leading it over most of the Near and Middle East for nearly three years, in Chapter Fourteen. With the 1st Battalion fated to be out of the ring for so long, and the 2nd Battalion doomed to disaster and years of cruel captivity, the young Battalions, the reborn 3rd and the new 4th, were destined to win a twin lion's share of the Regiment's battle records and honours in the years ahead.

In that autumn of 1941, which saw the departure of both the older Battalions overseas, the 3rd had already begun to prove its mettle at Razmak. The 4th, only briefly mentioned so far, had been raised at Dharmasala on 15th March, 1941, by Lieutenant-Colonel N. M. Macleod. In July it joined the 16th Brigade in a summer camp near Manserah, north-west of Abbottabad, but three months later was transferred to the new 33rd Brigade of the 7th Division forming at Campbellpore.

The 7th Division was then only a training and reserve formation which had no definite operational role and whose brigades and units were subject to constant changes.

There we shall leave the two new Battalions, with two more years of hard training ahead of them, to continue the tale of their progress, up to their arrival on the Burma front, in Chapter Ten.

The 5th Battalion will also appear on the scene in that chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

MALAYA: AUTUMN, 1941

(Map 35, facing page 300)

I. BEFORE THE STORM

THE 28th Brigade landed at Port Swettenham, in Malaya, on 3rd September, 1941, just two years after the outbreak of war with Germany, but the Japanese were still biding their time. The three Gurkha battalions had just over three months in which to adjust themselves to local conditions before the Japanese blow fell.

The 2nd Battalion went to Ashley Camp, near Ipoh, the 2/2nd to another camp close by, and the 2/9th to Taiping, fifty miles farther north. The 28th Brigade was originally intended to complete the 9th Indian Division, which had two brigade groups on the east coast, but it soon found itself earmarked to join the 11th Indian Division, whose area included the whole of the west coast north of the River Perak.

The Brigade remained in reserve, however, under the orders of III Indian Corps, which was responsible for the whole of Malaya except Johore and Malacca States in the south, which were held by the A.I.F. (Australian Imperial Forces).

The Gurkhas immediately applied themselves to forget or modify most of their desert-warfare ideas to suit the current notions of "bush warfare," as it was still called.

Bush warfare with existing resources, indeed, bore little resemblance to the jungle warfare of later years in Burma. There was no prospect of "manna from the skies." There were no wireless "Walkie-Talkie" sets to abolish isolation and aid control. Probably worst of all for the troops in battle, there were no armoured units and very few anti-tank guns or weapons for meeting Japanese armour.

All these facts should be remembered as the tale of setbacks and disasters unfolds.

No one, indeed, foresaw the force and ferocity of the storm which was steadily gathering all that autumn across the Gulf of Siam, or the crippling effects which the Army was to suffer from Japanese naval and air mastery from the outset.

But however much the threat was underestimated, there were just not enough men and munitions to go round. In Europe the German armies were storming east towards Moscow and across the Ukraine towards the Caucasus.

To add to the already heavy Imperial commitments in the Middle East vast material resources had to be diverted to sustain Russia at all costs. One of these costs was Malaya!

Under Malaya Command orders the period up to the end of November was devoted to individual, sub-unit and unit training. Formation exercises were to follow from December onwards in the vain hope that the Japanese would postpone their invasion until after the "wet" or north-east monsoon season (October to March). Hope, too, was pinned on the deterrent effect of the American Pacific and Asiatic Fleets "in being," reinforced by the last-minute despatch of the battleship *Prince of Wales* and the battle-cruiser *Renown* to Singapore (2nd December).

We shall not attempt to describe the growing signs of impending Japanese aggression or the detailed preparations made to meet them. Some outline is, however, necessary to explain how the Army came to deploy where it did and how the 2nd Battalion was rushed to battle.

The original plan for the defence of Singapore, which relied on relief after a limited time by a battle-fleet, with a sea-borne expedition, had suffered a violent death in 1940. Thenceforth reliance had to be placed primarily on air instead of naval power to locate and engage any sea-borne invasion.

The Army's primary task was to provide close protection of the Naval Base itself (though no battle-fleet could be spared for it), and of various scattered air bases. Some of the latter were in the far north, near the Thailand (Siam) border, as well as on the eastern coast, so the Army unavoidably became committed to defending the whole of Malaya.

One important air base which was converted from an existing civil aerodrome was at Alor Star, only twenty miles from the Thailand frontier. A position had to be selected, therefore, in a tract of swamp and jungle near Jitra for the 11th Division to occupy when necessary. No one liked it, but it was the best that could be found.

In the hope of improving this awkward situation a somewhat optimistic plan was evolved, called Operation "Matador." This provided for a rapid advance by 11th Indian Division from Kedah State into south Thailand to forestall the enemy at the most favourable beaches and airfields around Singora and Patani. A limited advance was also planned on the road Kroh-Patani (in the centre of the peninsula) to secure a better defensive position near what was known as "The Ledge."

Unfortunately—and inevitably—the application of "Matador" became cramped by political provisos demanding non-aggression on our part or prior Japanese violation of Thailand "neutrality."

Success also was calculated to depend on our columns getting at least twenty-four hours' flying start before the Japanese could be expected to land. At almost the eleventh hour, the 5th December, the War Office authorized the C.-in-C., Far East, to operate "Matador" if he judged that a Japanese expedition was clearly making for the Kra Isthmus, but this "latitude" was to prove of no practical value. Seldom, indeed, can so many hopes have been built on a plan with so few chances of timely application.

It was obvious that a quick decision would be called for at the outset—to advance or stand; but in the fog of war and monsoon mists the Japanese were to be ashore more than twelve hours before the forward troops knew their role.

Apart from the 11th Division, eagerly awaiting the word "Go" in Kedah, the end of November, 1941, saw the Army roughly grouped as follows:

28th Brigade still near Ipoh, ready to join 11th Division.

9th Indian Division, with two Brigade Groups, on the east coast: 8th at Kota Bharu and 22nd around Kuantan.

A.I.F., with two Brigade Groups, 22nd and 27th, in Malacca and Johore States.

Fortress Troops, with 12th Indian Infantry Brigade, in Command Reserve in Singapore Island.

It only remains to be said that the total air resources amounted to fewer than 150 machines, largely of obsolescent if not obsolete types. These represented about a quarter of what had been demanded for the air component to carry out its anti-invasion task.

II. THE STORM BREAKS

By 29th November, 1941, the 11th Division was warned to be prepared to operate "Matador" at a few days' notice, consequent

on growing signs of Japanese aggression. This involved various local moves and preparations for the planned offensive and put a complete stop to all work on defences and demolitions near the frontier. The period of notice was reduced by stages till by 6th December the forward Brigade Groups (6th and 15th) were packed up and ready to move in half an hour.

Meanwhile, the 28th Brigade units near Ipoh were in a similar state of eager anticipation, hoping hourly to get the word "Go" for "Matador." News came through, to higher H.Qs. but not to the troops, on the afternoon of 6th December that two large Japanese convoys had been sighted at noon that day off the southern tip of French Indo-China, steering west. It was clear that if the convoys held their course they could reach Singora or Kota Bharu by about midnight 7th/8th December. To get its flying start the 11th Division should be on the move during the night 6th/7th December, but no orders came.

The C.-in-C., Far East, still felt tied, it seems, by the terms of his mandate and still had to allow for the convoys turning north to demonstrate against Thailand. Air contact was then tragically lost in the thick monsoon clouds until the evening of the 7th, when a few hostile vessels were dimly sighted off the Singora coast. It was already too late for Operation "Matador" to have a favourable start, but the vital decision—to attack or defend—was still delayed.

28th Brigade had been told "to stand-by to operate but do NOT repeat Not operate scheme Matador." The Brigade advanced parties, including Captain N. P. G. O'Neal of 2nd Battalion, were, however, sent off by road about midday on the 7th to report to H.Q., 11th Division.

At about midnight 7th/8th December Japanese troops started to land at Singora and at Kota Bharu, where 8th Brigade Group fought fiercely but vainly to stem the invasion.

Singapore was bombed during the early hours of 8th December, but it was not till 0600 hours that units of 28th Brigade were placed at one hour's notice to move. By midday news of the Japanese attacks had trickled through to the troops, whose impatience can well be imagined.

The 11th Division did not receive orders till 1330 hours to occupy the Jitra position and to send delaying detachments into Thailand. The Japanese then had over thirteen hours' start.

That afternoon the 2nd Battalion got its orders to move with 28th Brigade the same evening to join 11th Division.

The fact that "Matador" had lingered, then died, does not seem to have been known to the main body of the Battalion, moving north that night by train, bound, all wishfully thought, for Thailand. With the dawn came disillusion and orders to detrain at Alor Star station, still some thirty miles south of the Thailand frontier. "Matador" was dead and buried it appeared, and 11th Division was already moving into the half-prepared Jitra defences, about twelve miles north of Alor Star town and about five miles north of the airfield. The 28th Brigade was to be in Divisional reserve south of Jitra.

The 2nd Battalion was directed to a bivouac site at Bukit Pinang, about a mile east of the airfield, and was joined there about noon on 9th December by the Transport Column. This had driven in Brigade convoy for eighteen hours, and all through the night, to cover the 170 miles from Ipoh.

The Battalion had hardly survived its first shock of the sudden change-over to a defensive policy when it received another. The Alor Star air base, for whose defence the 11th Division was now deploying near Jitra, was in a state of alarm and confusion, with every sign of rapid evacuation, as the Battalion skirted it to reach Bukit Pinang. The air situation in fact was already serious. Threats of airborne landings immediately diverted the 2/9th Gurkhas to anti-paratroop and L. of C. protection south of Alor Star. "D" Company was also detached from the 2nd Battalion for the protection of the airfield and did not rejoin till 15th December. This was to prove a blessing in disguise, as we shall see later.

That afternoon saw further alarms and excursions for others besides "D" Company. Japanese bombing and strafing had already destroyed or grounded many aircraft on the airfield, where the guards were in a state of anxious tension verging on panic. False alarms of hostile parachute landings soon diverted "A" Company and the Carrier Platoon to form an air-defence mobile column—until it was proved that the "parachutes" were only the puffs of anti-aircraft artillery bursts. The rest of the Battalion was busy till dusk digging slit trenches in bivouacs.

To add to the first depressions of the day, steady rain set in and was to continue with only short breaks for the next few days. These were the rain clouds which had cloaked the hostile convoy's approach and were now to swamp much of the frontier battle zone. We shall leave this damp and depressing scene for a while to set the stage for the coming battle of Jitra.

DISPOSITIONS OF 11TH DIVISION TROOPS AROUND JITRA
(*Map 5, page 87*)

(*Note* : Milestones, or M.S., show distances northward from Alor Star town—e.g., Jitra near M.S. 12.)

In the forward area round Jitra the 6th and 15th Brigades were wearily and belatedly moving into their allotted positions after many days of frustration and futile preparations for "Matador." The sudden change to the defensive found many troops on the wrong foot and in the wrong place. The Japanese already enjoyed about thirteen hours' start, and further delays and disorders occurred in sorting out the troops for entirely new roles.

For example, on the main northward road from Jitra to Singora a mobile delaying group of 1/8th Punjabis (6th Brigade) was passed through a frontier detachment of 2/9th Jats (15th Brigade) on the evening of the 8th. Then 1/14th Punjabis, which had first deployed in outposts near Asun (M.S. 16), moved forward to a frontier delaying rôle on 10th December.

This last move was to draw the 2nd Battalion into battle, and many of the other units were to be involved or associated with the Battalion in the confused fighting of the next few days. A general idea of unit areas must, therefore, be given.

Map 5 shows the rough extent of the brigade sectors and the general areas occupied by the various units in the Jitra defences. On both brigade fronts the reserve battalions, 1/8th Punjabis on the left and 1/14th Punjabis on the right, were allotted initial outpost rôles. The 28th Brigade formed the Divisional Reserve with specified tasks of counter-attack or rearward defence.

In accordance with these rôles Lieutenant-Colonel J. O. Fulton and the senior officers of 2nd Battalion were busy from an early hour on 10th December doing reconnaissances of the Jitra defences. There were more false alarms of hostile paratroops which kept both "A" and "D" Companies on the alert. Most of the Battalion was engaged in digging or in unloading and moving defence stores. The working parties probably did not stop to think what all this meant, but it was in fact only another example of the inevitable rush and confusion caused by the late cancellation of "Matador." Much of the defence stores and wire had been kept mobile till the last minute. The Jitra defences, already partly waterlogged from the incessant rain, still needed considerable labour and materials for completion.

On the afternoon of the 10th the Divisional Commander, Major-General Murray-Lyon, decided to fight for more time north of Jitra to allow the defences to be strengthened. He ordered the 15th Brigade Commander, Brigadier Garrett, to delay the enemy north of the Asun outpost position (M.S. 16), then held by 1/14th Punjabis, up to dawn on 12th December. In consultation with Brigadier Garrett he agreed to allot another battalion for the outposts in order to free the whole of 1/14th Punjabis for a fighting withdrawal farther north.

The 28th Brigade Commander, Brigadier W. St. J. Carpendale, was accordingly ordered that evening to place 2/1st G.R. (less the company detached for airfield defence) under command of 15th Brigade for occupation of the Asun outpost position.

The 2nd Battalion duly moved off about an hour before dusk, through Jitra and northward to Asun, being ferried forward in relays by M.T. to save marching distance. It left "D" Company behind at the airfield, where already hangars and petrol tanks were in flames and the last stages of hurried evacuation were in progress. It was a depressing sight when the men all knew that they were marching out to defend it. They were soon to realize that the Japanese had gained a crushing air mastery in the first forty-eight hours of the war. This air mastery became painfully obvious. Fleets of twenty-seven or fifty-four bombers passed over regularly on 9th and 10th on their way to bomb Penang, Butterworth and other airfields. There seemed to be little prospect of any close air support; in fact, the men were never to see a British plane throughout the retreat to Singapore.

Putting such thoughts behind them the men moved on in the dark to arrive at M.S. 15 about 2200 hours and to settle down there for a fair night's rest—the last for many nights to come. The outpost position lay another mile ahead, but it was not required to be occupied till dawn on the 11th so only one company was deployed for local protection. The Commanding Officer and reconnaissance parties had been warned in time to get forward for a fleeting view of their areas before dark. They found no prepared outpost position, but expected to have plenty of time in which to develop it.

The fighting of the next few days will be described in some detail in order to give an idea of the conditions and handicaps imposed on the troops from the outset. The first actions were to have a lasting effect on all that followed during the long retreat ahead. The Battalion was to suffer a first crippling blow from which it

was to stage a magnificent recovery before a second and worse disaster befell it.

Notes:

1. " Dawn " or " first light " may be taken as being at 0530 hours, and " dusk " or " last light " at 1930 hours throughout the campaign.
2. A list of the British Officers with the 2nd Battalion in Malaya is given in Appendix (3C).

THE ACTION AT ASUN, 11TH DECEMBER, 1941

(Map 5, page 87)

At dawn on 11th December companies were led out to the outpost areas which had been roughly indicated to their advanced parties overnight. The 1/14th Punjabis had already moved north towards the frontier and had barely had time to do more than start scratching the position. There was no wire in position anywhere except for a single coil of Dannert wire round the overnight harbour near M.S. 15.

The Battalion could well have done with some of the defensive wire it had handled the day before, but the outpost allotment was not to arrive till dusk, too late to be of use.

At 0800 hours the Commanding Officer took Captain Mohan Singh, who had been left as a guide by the 1/14th Punjabis, on a tour of the areas where the forward companies were digging in, as busy as beavers. They were disposed with:

" A " Company (Captain W. G. Seaward) astride M.S. 16 and immediately behind the concrete bridge or causeway at M.S. 16 $\frac{1}{4}$, which there formed a defile across the marshy Alor Jali stream (hereafter called " Asun bridge ").

" C " Company (2nd-Lieutenant J. M. H. Gould) westward of " A " around the wooded eminence of Bukit Bemban.

(We may note here that Captain Mohan Singh, willingly or otherwise, was in Japanese hands that afternoon. How soon he actually joined forces with them, or how much he disclosed of our dispositions around Jitra, is unknown. We do know that he achieved rapid promotion, to become G.O.C. of the so-called Indian National Army, later to fight against us in Burma.)

The two forward companies covered a combined frontage of about two miles, including the main trunk road.

" B " Company (2nd-Lieutenant N. P. Martin) occupied a reserve position half a mile south of Asun bridge but did not remain there long.

Battalion H.Q., with "A" Echelon transport, occupied the half-prepared harbour in a rubber plantation immediately east of M.S. 15.

"C" Company gained touch on its left with the 6th Brigade outpost battalion, 1/8th Punjabis, whose position lay about six miles north-west of Jitra astride the road to Perlis, and arranged frequent patrol meetings.

During the morning Japanese aircraft became very active, flying in low sorties up and down the trunk road. They were not engaged for fear of disclosing our positions, but these were probably pinpointed already. What the enemy did not discover from the air he probably learnt from spies or agents disguised as locals. One such, taken in the act of laying pointer strips, was sent back before noon by 1/14th Punjabis.

He was well equipped for his task and was probably only one of many. These pests were active throughout the campaign and were no doubt responsible for the frequent bombing or shelling of vulnerable targets, including H.Qs., however often they moved. Many of these agents had lived on their allotted areas and studied them in peace time.

At 1000 hours Brigadier K. A. Garrett, 15th Brigade Commander, called at H.Q. on his way to join the frontier battalion farther north. He went forward in a 2nd Battalion carrier which received an unlucky mortar bomb near the front, both the Brigadier and the driver, Rifleman Jhalbir Pun, being wounded—the first Battalion casualty of the campaign. Brigadier Garrett returned to Jitra to have his wound dressed, and on his way northward again stopped at 2nd Battalion H.Q. at 1100 hours to give further orders. It appeared that the forward company of 1/14th Punjabis had been forced back from the frontier at dusk the day before to the main battalion position along the Sungei Laka (M.S. 23½), just south of Changlun. Early on the 11th a strong Japanese attack had been beaten back, but in order to assist in its withdrawal later the 1/14th required another rifle company, less a platoon, to be in position close behind it.

The Brigadier had selected a position near M.S. 18½ and directed Colonel Fulton to send forward his reserve company ("B"), less one platoon, with two sections of carriers as escort, to occupy this position under 1/14th Punjabis command.

"B" Company, less one platoon, was therefore uprooted from its position and deployed near M.S. 18½ at about midday. The odd platoon went back to help man the Battalion H.Q. perimeter

at M.S. 15. During the early afternoon 1/14th fell back under pressure from Changlun, leaving the bridge there only partially demolished, to a new position near M.S. 21. Brigadier Garrett was with 1/14th all the afternoon and was joined there by General Murray-Lyon around 1500 hours. There were then no signs of any strong follow-up by the enemy, and as the General was still anxious to gain time he instructed the 1/14th to hold a position in front of 2/1st overnight. Colonel Fulton, after seeing " B " Company into position, paid a liaison visit to 1/14th, where he heard Colonel Fitzpatrick give out orders, at about 1600 hours, for withdrawal to a position, to be held overnight, immediately in rear of that held by " B " Company (2/1st).

Leaving 1/14th apparently unmolested and about to make a deliberate withdrawal, Fulton returned to meet General Murray-Lyon at Asun and conduct him round the outposts. Before the General left for the south he told officers at H.Q. that the 1/14th in front appeared to have the situation well in hand and that a serious Japanese attack need not be expected for another forty-eight hours. When asked about artillery support for the outposts, the General assured Fulton that the guns with 1/14th would come under his orders when that battalion passed through next day.

From 1600 hours a violent monsoon storm swept across the country southwards, reducing visibility in torrents of rain and swirling mists. Otherwise all seemed to be quiet at Battalion H.Q. till shortly after 1700 hours, when indistinct sounds of gun-fire were wafted down the wind from the north, then died away. Shortly before 1800 hours the long-awaited stores of defensive wire arrived in a 3-ton lorry which was immediately sent on to deliver the allotments for " A " and " C " Companies at M.S. 16, but it was never seen or heard of again. Then a long column of 1/14th Punjab motor vehicles drove past H.Q. at high speed, but none stopped to report. Their hurried passage caused some surprise but no special alarm. It was assumed that unwanted transport was being sent back for the night.

Forward companies had nothing unusual to report, but as a precautionary measure Fulton sent forward all eight 15-cwt. trucks to help out the forward companies if necessary. All surplus vehicles had already been sent back to join " B " Echelon behind Jitra.

Soon after 1800 hours an officer on a motor cycle roared up from the north, checked for a moment, and yelled out: " Jap tanks

have reached Asun bridge—got that?” Fulton raised his hat in acknowledgment, but turning to his officers remarked: “ Wind up. Why I only left the 1/14th an hour or two ago and they were as right as rain—this ruddy rain.” More sounds of firing had certainly been heard ahead, but in the stormy gusts from the north, battle noises seemed to be magnified and muffled in turn.

A platoon of “ A ” Company, which had worked round as a fighting patrol eastward of the road and back through H.Q., had just reported all clear and was sent on northward. Such was the situation at H.Q. around 1815 hours, when a storm of another kind was about to strike the Battalion.

To understand what follows we must digress awhile to describe what had happened up in front, though the full story was only pieced together much later.

By 1700 hours 1/14th Punjabis' withdrawal to their selected position near M.S. 18 was going smoothly without enemy pressure. Subordinate commanders had gone back to see their new areas. One company and some carriers had taken up a position near M.S. 20, but the rest and the guns were mostly on the move rearward.

Suddenly, at the height of the storm and without any warning, a Japanese armoured blitz burst through the rear company and straight on down the road through the rest of the Battalion. In the van of the blitz were twelve medium tanks with cannons and machine guns blazing hard. Behind them came twenty-four light tanks, spaced in groups along a column of lorried infantry nearly a battalion strong. This shattering onslaught completely surprised and overwhelmed the 1/14th and swept on to engulf “ B ” Company of the 2nd Battalion in turn.

Subedar Budhilal Gurung described later how seven Japanese tanks swept over their positions, impervious to Bren fire, and then drove on. Japanese infantry following up were checked and a flank attack thrown back, but soon it became impossible to tell friend from foe in the stream of fugitives and Japs flowing round both flanks. Lieutenant N. P. Martin then led a break-out into the jungle eastward and was killed in a clash with the enemy a few hours later. Subedar Budhilal and Jemadar Panchkar Gurung rallied a score of men and managed to reach Bt. Penia, on the extreme right or eastern flank of the Jitra position, where they joined a company of 2/9th Jats. Lieutenant F. H. H. Dominy managed to break out to the west with some of his carrier platoon and a few of “ B ” Company, but had to abandon his carriers

after hiding them in thick jungle. We shall hear more of both these parties presently.

Of the 1/14th, about 200 managed to find their way across country to rejoin near Jitra next day. Among them was Brigadier Garrett, who had remained at the front despite a painful neck wound.

Before we return to the 2nd Battalion, still blissfully ignorant of what was in store, it may be interesting and instructive to glance at the Japanese side of the picture.

We know now from enemy accounts that the force which struck so fiercely across the frontier was known as Saeki Unit, from its bold commander, Major Saeki. It consisted of a specially organized group of twelve medium and twenty-four light tanks, under Captain Yamani, two guns, and a lorried battalion with mortars and M.M.Gs. (including so-called "fighting engineers" trained to remove obstacles and repair bridges). In all there were some thirty-six armoured vehicles and forty-five lorries. Its orders were to cross the frontier into Kedah State ahead of the main body of the 5th Division, and push south "until it encountered opposition which it could not overcome."

A Japanese description of this action speaks of "a storm of unusual ferocity during which the enemy's forward troops were quickly vanquished in the tank battle." It went on to point out how a commander less bold than Major Saeki might, after his initial success, have argued: "I am now isolated; I must be cautious and await my main body." "But," it added, "Major Saeki was a bold commander; instead of this he said: 'I have broken through the enemy, therefore I can go on.' Thus he who took advantage of the storm was victorious and he who was upset by the storm was defeated." (Shades of peace-time manœuvres and demands for "cease-fire" at the onset of inclement weather!)

So Saeki Unit went on, to bump "A" Company in position behind Asun bridge at about 1815 hours. Here Major Saeki seems to have held back his tanks at first (possibly still rallying or mopping up) until an infantry attack had been developed across the shallow marsh, covered by a mortar barrage. Then the tanks went for the bridge, which was still intact.

To return to our own side. This bridge, which was really a long arched concrete causeway, had been prepared for demolition by a party of 23rd Field Company, whose commander, Major Bate, was on the spot. No anti-tank guns had got back from in

front, but " A " Company had the Battalion's only anti-tank rifle (Boys .55 inch).

When tanks suddenly emerged out of the misty rain at the north end of the bridge, under cover of the mortar barrage and infantry attack, things happened quickly.

The sapper N.C.O. in charge of the demolition was quickly hit after trying to set off the charge. Major Bate dashed forward and pressed the plunger again, but nothing happened. Either the exploder wires had been broken by mortar fire or the heavy rain had damped the fuses. Major Bate fell riddled with bullets while frantically trying to trace the failure. Seeing what had happened, C.M.H. (No. 6951) Manbahadur Gurung of " A " Company dashed forward with the anti-tank rifle, under heavy fire, to bring it into action closer to the bridge. With cool unconcern he laid it on the leading tank, fired, and scored a hit. The tank slewed round and stopped. The next tank tried to edge its way past the first, but was hit in turn, slumping over into the ditch. Again Manbahadur engaged two more tanks coming up. The first he hit; the other turned away and made off, while the crews of the first three fled to cover.

Manbahadur had stopped the tanks, but his ammunition was finished, the bridge was still intact, and Major Bate still lay out on the open causeway. Manbahadur dashed out, under heavy fire from the north bank, and picked up and carried him back, only to find him dead in his arms.

There was no hope of doing anything about the demolition and nothing to stop the tanks as " A " Company became desperately engaged with Japanese infantry. The artillery earmarked for the outposts had been involved in the disaster, together with the only outpost reserve, " B " Company. Manbahadur's lone and gallant effort, which was rewarded by a richly deserved I.O.M., had at least gained time and forced the tanks to hold back till the bridge was cleared by infantry, but it proved of no avail.

All this time heavy mortar concentrations had been pounding " A " Company, while infantry were swarming across the waist-deep marsh into the forward positions. By 1830 hours the Japanese had closed in on " A " Company from the north and west and were engaging " C " Company too. Accurate mortar fire caused considerable damage and losses. " C " Company's telephone terminal was destroyed by a direct mortar hit, while in " A " Company a 3-inch mortar was similarly destroyed and the telephone wire cut.

At the H.Q. harbour a mile back the increased sounds of battle were explained by messages from the forward companies, which started to come in at 1815 hours. Captain W. G. Seaward reported from "A" that the Japs had infiltrated right into his area, and was told "to kick them out and hang on." Lieutenant J. M. H. Gould, from "C," reported attacks under heavy mortar fire.

Then at 1830 hours telephone wires from both forward companies went dead—for good. At H.Q. it now looked as if there might be something in what the motor-cyclist had said after all. Vain efforts were made to get through to Brigade H.Q., but that line seemed to be dead too. Meanwhile the H.Q. Group stood to and grimly prepared for the worst. "Molotov cocktails" were all they had for taking on tanks. These were taken out of dry storage in trucks and distributed to posts, but there was slender hope of keeping them dry enough to ignite in the prevailing deluge, as was soon to be proved. Patrols were sent out, but they failed to return. Then, just after 1830 hours, the line from 15th Brigade H.Q. came clear and the Brigade Major (Laman) heard Colonel Fulton say: "The Japs have got through the 1/14th and are on my front. They have got tanks and seem to be—." Then the line went dead again for keeps. Major Laman reported that as Fulton was speaking he could hear loud reports like guns firing close by. They were. The blitz had arrived.

But we must again defer the fate of this last Battalion group until we have cleared up the story of how "A" and "C" Companies were "liquidated." When Captain Seaward was told to hang on with "A," he managed to restore the situation with a bayonet charge, but not for long. The enemy pressed on again in front, round the left flank and soon in rear. Hemmed in on three sides, Seaward decided to break out in a bayonet charge eastward with all he could collect. He rallied about sixty survivors east of the road and made off southward across country. Meanwhile "C" Company held on desperately for an hour after "A" Company had been silenced, under similar mortar pounding and pressure round both flanks. Then Gould, too, was forced to disengage, and, extricating most of his company, he made off southward into the jungle. We shall revert to the fates of both the forward companies presently.

The Japanese Saeki Unit had thus swept through the outpost line to bear down on the H.Q. harbour at about 1845 hours. There the action started with mortar and automatic fire from the north, followed by a charge of yelling Japs. This attack was

beaten back by Bren fire, but the enemy came on again led by an officer waving a sword, to be thrown back a second time.

But the worst was then to come. Out of the misty, fading light of dusk emerged seven medium tanks, hurtling down the road from the north. Two swept on south; the rest halted, turned their turrets and let fly with both cannons and machine guns, raking the perimeter from the west and south. Our small-arms fire had no effect and the few spluttering Molotovs which ignited proved no better than squibs. Drivers tried to move their trucks, but one after another these were knocked out or set ablaze. One carrier, driven by Rifleman Jembahadur, attempted a gallant charge, but it was promptly knocked over on its side.

After fifteen minutes' inferno of fire the tanks were seen to be turning to enter the harbour. There was nothing to stop them; to hold on a minute longer was only to invite complete annihilation, so Fulton decided to pull out and save all he could. The word to withdraw was shouted round, and it was now a case of each group for itself and the devil take the hindmost. Two or three posts did not hear the order and fought on till overrun. Others struggled desperately out through the wire and into the jungle eastward. There officers collected the survivors into parties and made off towards Jitra.

This last Battalion group, mustering only three Bren guns and some fifty rifles, had put up a stout fight for half an hour. In a letter written later in the month Fulton said: "Battalion H.Q. held off the infantry all right but then they brought up heavy tanks and we had them on two sides with infantry on the third so we had to get out as best we could in the dark. John Winkfield formed a party, Charles Wylie another, Peter O'Neal and I a third. We were all separated and were now, of course, behind the Japs who were between us and our main position. Briefly, we spent the night in the jungle, later under our own shell fire or shot up from behind by Japs, but really quite safe. Peter and I, with ten men, worked by compass round a flank and by 10 a.m. next day got into our own positions (east of Jitra). Gradually during the day others turned up. . . . As a result of this exciting though brief action I virtually lost my battalion as a unit."

Winkfield's and Wylie's parties joined up and had similar experiences, officers helping non-swimmers across deep streams and marshes and piloting their parties across no man's land to our lines. The Winkfield/Wylie party had to lie low during a fierce counter-attack by 1/8th Punjabis and 2/9th Jats (who for a time

engaged each other by mistake) and then go forward by rushes, waving their vests. Other groups bumped Japanese closing forward on Jitra and got killed or captured.

We can now revert to the remnants of "A" and "C" Companies, also struggling southwards through marsh and jungle. Seaward himself piloted about twenty men of "A" through the same hazards as the H.Q. parties, to reach our lines safely.

About forty more of "A" struggled through the swamps farther east, joined up with a number of 1/14th Punjabis, and reached Bt. Penia, where Subedar Budhilal formed the sixty-one survivors of "A" and "B" into a small company to reinforce the Jats' position. This group will be mentioned again, but its fuller story, as told by Budhilal himself, will be found in Appendix 4.

The story of the "C" Company survivors is also told, by Gould himself, in Appendix 4. In short, after repeated efforts to break through the battle front, in which only Subedar Dilbahadur Gurung and his orderly succeeded, Gould's party of about forty men was edged farther and farther westward. It picked up Dominy's party west of Jitra and survived many adventures, including a daring storm-bound passage by fishing boat to Penang. There it was on the point of setting sail again, when it was forbidden to do so by a senior officer, so had to share in the capitulation on 19th December. Its gallant efforts had deserved a better fate.

There were other parties of all companies which, after getting lost or lying low, approached the Jitra position, only to find our troops gone and, skirting round the Japanese, rejoined farther south. One of these small groups turned the tables on the Japs. After being captured the men all broke away again, rounded up seven Japs (complying with their earnest request to be shot), then found two unguarded Jap tanks and set them on fire with Molotovs.

So ended a black day for the Battalion. The Japanese Saeki Unit, exploiting the storm and crushing armour, had completely submerged the two forward battalions in turn. Without warning of disaster ahead the 2nd Battalion had been struck down and broken up, company by company. That it was not a final knock-out blow is a tribute to Gurkha guts and gallantry to which no words can do justice.

The results of the action at Asun must now be summed up.

On the credit side. Of the 550-odd men in action roughly 200 were to rejoin and fight again later, of whom 90 assembled near

Jitra on 12th December to form the nucleus of a new-born battalion.

On the debit side. 350 were missing and their fates unknown till long afterwards. Between 20 and 30 were probably killed in action, but how many were killed on the spot, were butchered when captured, or died in the jungle will never be known.

Officer casualties were:

2nd-Lieutenant N. P. Martin	Killed in action north of Asun.
2nd-Lieutenant J. M. H. Gould	Captured at Penang, 19th December.
2nd-Lieutenant F. H. H. Dominy	Captured at Penang, 19th December.
Lieutenant B. M. Pattanayak, I.M.S. attached	Captured near Asun.
Subedar Raman Rana	Captured near Jitra.
Jemadar Jasbahadur Rana	Captured at Penang.
Jemadar Sunar Gurung	Captured near Jitra.
Jemadar Harkbahadur Thapa	Captured near Jitra.
Jemadar Puransing Khawas	Captured near Asun.
Jemadar Panchkar Gurung	Killed at Sungei Patani, with Subedar Budhilal's escape party. (See <i>Appendix 4.</i>)

CHAPTER SIX

FROM JITRA TO THE PERAK RIVER

I. DEFEAT AND RETREAT

THE surviving fragment of the Battalion was to play only a minor part in the actual fighting round Jitra. It was neither to exchange shots nor cross swords with the Japanese on this occasion. But the tired and hungry little band which escaped from Asun and assembled again near Jitra on the 12th was to have no time to relax or find food before being set to work again on a new position.

To understand where the party found itself a general idea of the confused fighting which went on from the evening of the 11th till early on the 13th must be given, but no attempt will be made to describe the whole course of the battle.

The original layout of the 11th Division in the Jitra defences on 9th December is shown in Map 5. By the evening of the 11th certain changes had been imposed by the day's fighting—i.e.:

2/2nd G.R. from 28th Brigade had replaced the missing 1/14th Punjab Regiment on the Bata River reserve position, a mile south of Jitra.

Brigadier Carpendale had been sent forward to command 15th Brigade (in place of Brigadier Garrett, missing) as well as his own 28th Brigade, of which 2/1st and 2/2nd had already become involved.

The Japanese headlong career from M.S. 21 to M.S. 15 had thus deprived the 11th Divisional Commander of his reserve except for 2/9th G.R., which was already dispersed on L.-of-C. protection.

Saeki Unit had indeed struck a serious blow, but it was not yet finished with. It was dark on the 11th when the last of the 2nd Battalion had been "liquidated," but Major Saeki was not content. He went on to bump the main Jitra line, and dent it too.

Possibly he did not need to consider caution or a pause for

daylight reconnaissance, being well informed of every detail of the defences. Still, it was a bold decision. It may be of interest, if not directly concerned with our 2nd Battalion story, to see how the Saeki blitz was finally halted.

The tanks, having finished their work round Asun, continued their career, overran a 1st Leicesters patrol near M.S. 14, and then made for a bridge near M.S. 13½ almost in the front-line defences. There the demolition charge failed, as at Asun, and Japanese riflemen established themselves close enough to foil all further efforts to blow up the bridge. But the blitz was at last stopped by a section of anti-tank guns which knocked out the two leading tanks, on which four more piled up behind, to form an effective road-block. Artillery concentrations on this mix-up caused a series of explosions after which firing from the tanks ceased. Meanwhile, strong parties of Japanese riflemen had been working round far out to the east and by dusk had occupied some hilly features on the 2/9th Jats' right and rear. They continued to harass and infiltrate here throughout the battle, and their presence behind the battle front was to have a direct influence on the fate of the 2nd Battalion later on.

Japanese accounts say that Saeki Unit alone was engaged on 11th December and that it lost half its men and machines. It certainly earned the "special citation" awarded to it.

The leading Japanese Brigade (six battalions) closed up to the 15th Brigade front after dark on the 11th, and by midnight firing was general from the trunk road eastwards. Enemy pressure increased in the early hours of the 12th on the centre of 15th Brigade and on the east flank. To meet the latter, two companies of 2/16th Punjabis were sent across from 6th Brigade to occupy the Kelubi area at about 0300 hours.

The brunt of the successive attacks throughout the day fell on the Leicesters and Jats. The 6th Brigade was not engaged and was heavily drawn on to reinforce 15th Brigade or the threatened L. of C. Far away on the Kroh road, fifty miles south-eastward, Krohforce was being steadily forced back by a strong enemy column which threatened to cut in behind the Division near Sungei Patani and reach the vital Muda River bridges south of it. In fact the enemy was already knocking at the back door as the situation steadily worsened throughout the day at Jitra.

There the enemy soon exploited a tactical gap which had been left between the Leicesters and Jats where the prearranged cross-fire and mines failed to stop them. Early in the morning two

companies of 1/8th Punjabis were brought across from 6th Brigade to prolong north-eastwards the 2/2nd Gurkhas' reserve line on the south bank of the Bata River. Later the rest of the 1/8th (withdrawn from outposts overnight) came across to counter-attack northwards. They only succeeded, after heavy losses, in partially reducing the enemy bulge east of the road. These companies and another of the Jats mistook each other for Japanese and exchanged heavy fire for some minutes. It was while this unfortunate mix-up was being sorted out that Winkfield's and Wylie's survivors picked their way through, to end some uncomfortable hours in no man's land.

Other 2nd Battalion parties came through during the morning and early afternoon, including the Fulton/O'Neal party and Seaward's. They were all directed to an assembly area near 15th Brigade H.Q., south of Tg Pau, and by 1600 hours had been reorganized to form a single company of H.Q. and four platoons, ninety strong, repeat STRONG—they had need to be.

Most of them had no need to be told of the fierce ebb and flow of the fighting which they had either come through or closely outflanked. It came as no surprise to them, therefore, to be told there would be no time for rest or food, though some earlier arrivals had got a few scraps from friendly neighbours. Among these were 2/2nd Gurkhas, still holding firm along the Bata River on both sides of the Iron Bridge, with a mix-up of other units under its orders farther right.

This soon became the front line as the enemy penetrated deeper between the Leicesters and Jats during the evening. It was less than a mile south of the Bata River front that the re-formed 2nd Battalion started to dig a new position, about 2,000 yards east of the main road and north of an estate track to Kelubi. Digging went on till well after dark, when weapon-pit stage was reached and posts were manned.

Meanwhile, fierce fighting had continued in the Jats' area where before dusk the left forward company had been overrun. After dark the Jats were ordered back to a line linking up the Bata River front, across country, with the Kelubi detachment of 2/16th Punjabis. The Bt. Penia company of the Jats on the extreme east flank has already been mentioned as receiving a number of "escapees" from Asun (including sixty of 2/1st G.R.), but it was completely isolated and was believed to have been overrun. No one in the 2nd Battalion itself knew that these sixty survivors were there until long afterwards.

On the Bata River front the Japanese kept up their pressure, and heavy firing continued until the early hours of the 13th. There was only fitful rest that night for anyone in the Battalion position, barely a mile behind the front, and every possibility of a Japanese break-through.

When this small 2nd Battalion party set off to dig itself in there had been no suggestion of anything but a protracted defence. No reports came from Brigade during the night and, in fact, with no telephone wire available, the only method of communication with units was by motor-contact officers on motor cycles (detached from units to Brigade and Divisional H.Qs.).

The need for an early withdrawal from Jitra had been in the Divisional Commander's mind since as early as 0800 hours, when the enemy's advance on the Kroh front began to threaten the Division's rear. Command H.Q., however, refused to consider the idea until late in the evening when the situation had got worse on both the Jitra and Kroh fronts. 11th Division was not given permission to withdraw until 2030 hours, and orders did not reach Brigades until nearly 2230 hours.

The plan in short was as follows:

- (1) Withdrawal, starting not before midnight 12th/13th, of the whole Division to the south of Alor Star, preparatory to the occupation of the next prepared position at Gurun (thirty miles south).
- (2) 28th Brigade, reconstituted with all its own battalions under Brigadier Carpendale, to hold an intermediate position along the Kedah River at Alor Star town, with one battalion at Langgar to protect the eastern road (this position was twelve miles south of the Bata River).
- (3) 6th Brigade to hold a position six miles farther south along the Simpang Empat canal.
- (4) 15th Brigade to be in Divisional reserve.

Brigadier Carpendale's own 28th Brigade H.Q. had opened near M.S. 10 after dark, and from there he issued his orders at about 2300 hours. A mile north of him and some 400 yards south of the Iron Bridge, 2/9th G.R., less two companies, had been brought forward to occupy a rear-guard position. The other two companies took post on the Kedah River near Alor Star airfield, about M.S. 8½.

28th Brigade orders were sent out by motor-contact officers who had to find their way along half-flooded roads in an area

where groups of Japanese had already got through or round the front. Some of these officers were lucky that night; others had exciting trips running the gauntlet under fire, or turning back to try another route. 2nd-Lieutenant A. Williams, with orders for 2nd Battalion, made several determined efforts to get through, but in vain. Two other officers also tried, but the Japanese were too strongly posted on all approaches.

2/2nd Gurkhas on the Bata had a busy night before orders arrived at 0130 hours (13th) to start withdrawal at 0200 hours. Japanese rifle and mortar fire had been persistent, many attempts had been made by enemy parties to swim the river, and at 2300 hours a strong attack on the Iron Bridge had been beaten back. The two field companies moved off soon after 0200 hours, leaving a party which blew up the Iron Bridge as the 2/2nd, with attached company 1/8th Punjabis, withdrew at 0230 hours.

Several attempted Japanese ambushes were quickly dealt with by bayonet charges, and by 0300 hours 2/2nd G.R., with attached troops, had passed through the 2/9th G.R. rear-guard position near M.S. 10.

The O.C., 2/9th G.R., having seen nothing of 2/1st, decided to hold on for a while, but, becoming heavily engaged and out-flanked, the rear guard had to fight its way out at 0430 hours after a very gallant action which cost twenty-seven casualties.

It will give some idea of the chaos and confusion that night to outline the fates of other troops which failed to pass through the 2/9th G.R. rear guard. The Leicesters were in a desperate position. The two forward companies could not be found and had to be abandoned. Of the rest, some swam or ferried themselves over the Bata in a single sampan and others were led off in an exhausting march through the swamp, across the railway bridge, and southwards. Many were lost or fell; others were drowned and only about 150 found their way back to the Division.

2/9th Jats, less the company out of touch at Bt. Penia, and 3/16th Punjabis made off southwards soon after 0200 hours and soon ran into strong Japanese parties lying in wait for them. There was some fierce fighting at close quarters with considerable casualties, but eventually reduced parties of both battalions were rallied and led off southwards.

Meanwhile, the 2nd Battalion remained in position, unaware of any orders for withdrawal or of the backward moves of the various units on its flanks during the early hours of the 13th. Dawn broke on the shattered defences with Japanese dead lying

thick in front of the Jats' and Leicesters' positions and more in front of the Bata River. But there were other remnants of the garrisons still in position, unknown to each other, besides 2/1st G.R.

The Bt. Penia group was there and remained unmolested till after dark that night. This was the last of all to leave and its adventures are described in Appendix 4. On the west the two "lost" companies of the Leicesters were still in position between Jitra and Manggoi, and at daybreak they became engaged with Japanese lorried troops moving down this road towards Jitra.

These companies fought their way clear and ploughed through swamps and streams to the sea. Some reached Penang, but only a sadly reduced remnant struggled through to join our forces at Yen. The Leicesters had been broken up more by mischance than in battle, and managed to save only about a quarter of their original 800 men.

The 6th Brigade had been largely thinned out earlier in the battle by withdrawals to L. of C. or transfer to 15th Brigade. The remnants suffered more in mishaps than in battle losses, as indeed did the 11th Division as a whole in its hasty retreat. It was a sad story of missing men and materials, lost on the wrong side of demolitions.

But we have left the 2nd Battalion too long; about to stand and start dawn patrolling. At about 0500 hours excited noises in a civilian coolie camp near by suggested that the Japs had got in there. Captain C. G. Wylie went out with two men to induce the 2nd Gurkhas to surround the camp with their carriers. He returned about 0600 hours with an astonishing story. He had first run into some 1/16th Punjabis retiring and then found the 2nd Gurkhas' position on the Bata deserted, except for one sick rifleman. This man was brought back with the story that his battalion had withdrawn three or four hours earlier, but why, he did not know. Wylie had also seen a Japanese party repairing the wooden bridge a mile north-east of the Iron Bridge.

The Division seemed to have vanished. Captain Seaward took out another patrol westward and soon came back to say that Japanese cyclists were pedalling with impunity along the track just east of the trunk road. It was 0630 hours, and no lingering doubt now remained that the Division had cleared out.

The Battalion would have to get back through or round the enemy for the second time in thirty-six hours. In the interval very few had had any food, but there was none at hand. At

0645 hours the hungry party set off cautiously towards the road with patrols ahead. One of these reported at 0730 hours that there was a stream of Japanese lorries moving southwards along the trunk road.

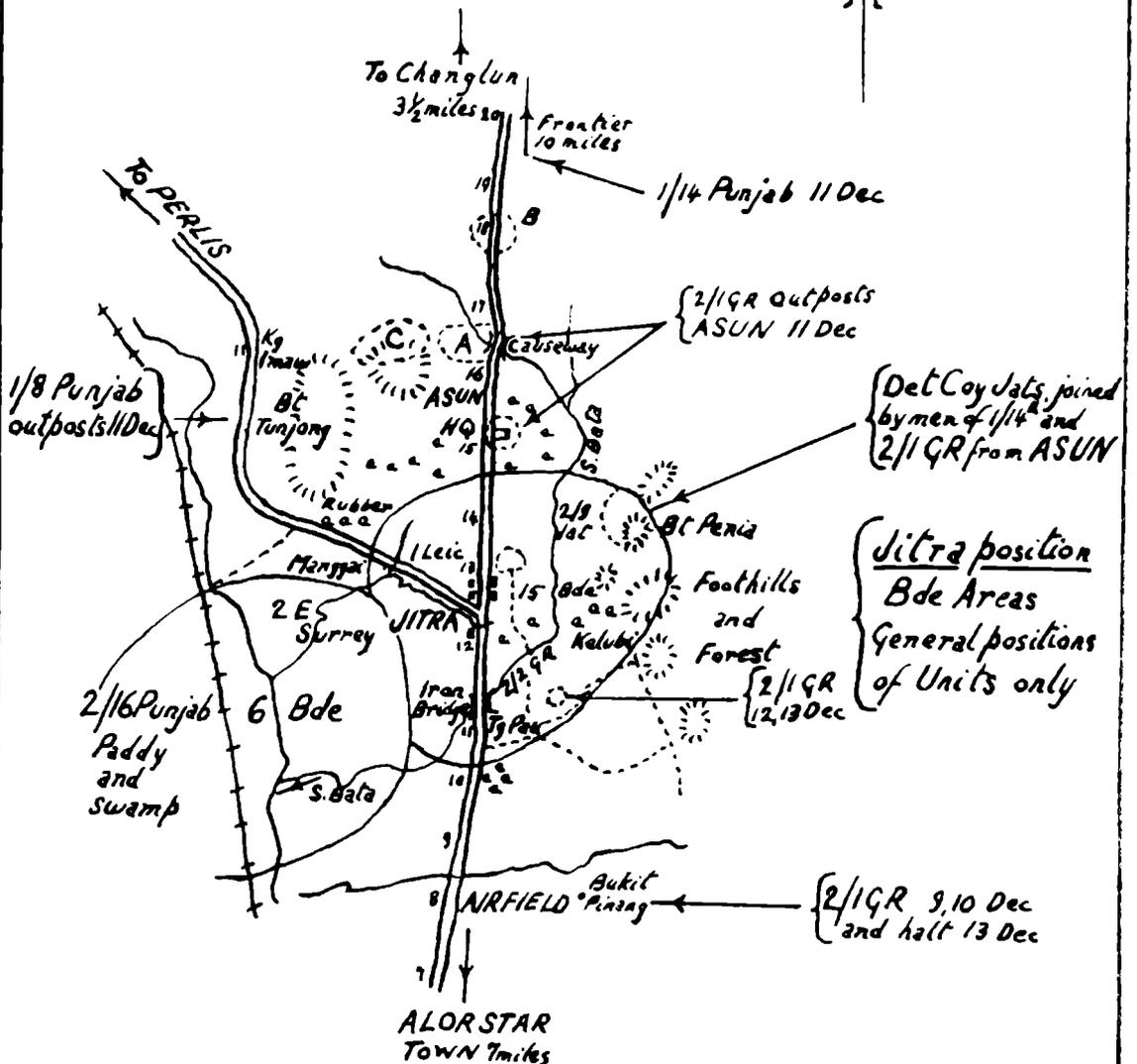
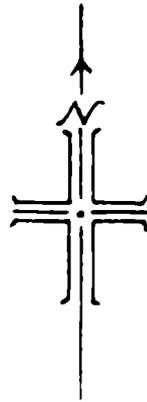
The column therefore turned south across country, keeping well clear of the road, and headed for the old bivouac site of 9/10th at Bukit Pinang. A deep stream caused a long delay as non-swimmers had to be ferried over a few at a time in the only small country boat to be found. About 100 stragglers from other units had been collected by the time the old bivouac had been reached. There the men were given a chance to rest while patrols went out to see if friend or foe held the airfield a mile to the west. Another party, of an officer and 100 men of the Jats, arrived, halted for a while, and went on south. They said they had made for the airfield but had sheered off when they saw Japs there. Friendly Malays said the same and confirmation came with a returning patrol and the sight of Japanese planes coming down to land.

So the party moved on again across country, making for the Kedah River east of Alor Star town, eight miles farther south.

This, it will be recalled, was an "intermediate position" for the Divisional withdrawal, to be held by 2/9th G.R. near Alor Star, and 2/2th G.R. farther east. The Battalion did not know this, of course, and were agreeably surprised, after their many misadventures, to find their old friends the 2nd Gurkhas again. This line, however, was on the point of being evacuated when the Battalion arrived just before 1800 hours, so only a short halt could be called. The Japanese had been pressing the 2/9th Gurkhas farther west, and fierce fighting had developed. However, there was just time for the men to enjoy a few minutes' rest and a cup of tea before moving off again.

It was a shock to discover that their destination was still twenty-four miles away, on the eastern flank of the Gurun position. They had already covered twenty-four gruelling miles from Asun, mostly on the wrong side of the enemy, and after two restless nights.

While the tired, hungry and depleted units totter southwards it will be as well to take stock of the situation in the 11th Division as a whole. The first day's fighting round Asun had started the rot for the defeat at Jitra, but the long and hurried retreat verged on disaster. The first dozen miles back to the Kedah line were perhaps the worst. They had involved a difficult disengagement from close contact, the loss or break-up of many units and groups,



SCALE :



SKETCH MAP

5

ASUN AND
JITRA

and a series of stiff and costly rear-guard actions. By the time the last remnants crossed the Kedah (with our Battalion party among them) the enemy's close pursuit had been shaken off, but the Division was certainly not out of the wood yet.

The rest of the retreat to the Gurun position, through the 6th Brigade position on the Simpang Empat Canal, has been described as "merely tedious." Those who took part might call this an understatement. The two rearward routes, the trunk road Alor Star-Gurun, and the "East Road" via Langgar-Pendang-Gurun (east), were scenes of indescribable congestion and unprintable language. But we cannot attempt to describe this nightmare of 13th-14th December, and shall wait until the struggling mass has sorted itself out in the temporary sanctuary of the Gurun position, before we reckon up the results of Jitra.

Our Battalion party picked up twenty-five more of its own men from the 2nd Gurkhas before moving off from the Kedah line at about 1800 hours, and it now began to look more like a company. On reaching Pendang (still fifteen miles short of its destination) at 0100 hours on the 14th, a long halt was called for urgently needed food and rest. A convenient Chinese shop provided a little food for all, and the exhausted men snatched a few hours of sleep, their first for sixty-five hours apart from rare and uneasy "catnaps."

During that time they had dug two positions, fought a hard action, and covered thirty-six muddy miles. They could have slept the clock round, but had to be roused and marched off again at 0500 hours, almost sleep-walking. Five hours later the weary column, including 2/2nd Gurkhas, halted again at Junun, where a kindly gang of coolies from a rubber estate cooked a most welcome hot meal. Before the column moved on again at 0200 hours contact had been made, by a 2nd Gurkhas' motor-cyclist, with 28th Brigade H.Q. and transport promised. But another seven and a half miles had been covered before the lorries arrived, and these served only to ferry the men over the last two miles to Chempadak estate, about two miles north-east of Gurun.

It was getting dark as the Battalion settled into its new position, but already the Japanese had started pressing down the main road on Gurun with tanks and lorried infantry. There was no time for rest or food, though "B" Echelon, contacted at last, promised a generous cooked meal at dawn (15th). Digging and wiring of the position had to be undertaken at once with tools and wire previously dumped. (*See Map 6, page 95.*)

It was a weakened and weary 11th Division which stood to fight again. It still existed, but only as a shadow of its former self.

The last of the 6th Brigade from the Simpang Empat line did not reach its position near Gurun until 1000 hours on the 14th. It was reduced to half its former strength. The 28th Brigade was in the best fighting trim. The 2/2nd and 2/9th Gurkhas had lost about fifty men each. Our 2nd Battalion could now muster two strong companies, including "D" Company, which was now at hand and rejoined early on the 15th. "D" Company had not been engaged and was fresh and fed, unlike the rest of the force.

The 15th Brigade was at little more than quarter strength, its three battalions each mustering about 200 (excluding "B" Echelons).

Most of the infantry units were short of weapons and vehicles as well as men. Some had neither carriers nor anti-tank rifles. In the artillery the most serious losses were in anti-tank guns, the shortage of which was to be sorely felt.

The Division in fact needed rest, reorganization and refitting, but there were no other troops available north of Johore and Malacca States. The only relief afforded the Division was that 12th Brigade from Command Reserve had come forward to take over the Kroh road front, which came under Corps control from 13th December.

Things had certainly gone badly for us in the first week of the war. The Japanese had not employed superior numbers, but had flung in tough shock troops relentlessly and exploited their tank monopoly to the full. Our plan for delaying near the frontier, added to the wide dispersion and mix-up at Jitra, had led to defeat in detail. The Jitra defences had serious defects. They were incomplete, isolated in "penny packets," and provided little depth. Most serious of all, the reserves were too weak, after the losses at Asun, to deal with penetrations. Moreover, the enemy, fully informed by air and agent, had been able to concentrate superior forces at the weakest spots and to dictate the course of the battle throughout. They used terrorizing methods to create "jitters" by crackers dropped in rear, and induced a constant feeling of Japanese ubiquity in flank and rear, as they continued to do throughout the campaign (and later in Burma until our troops took them on at their own game).

It says much for the Division that the front was never really

broken at Jitra, but remained firm from Kelubi to the Iron Bridge and westward till the retreat began.

More honour still to the men who fought and struggled their way back to fight again at Gurun.

II. THE BATTLE OF GURUN, 14TH–15TH DECEMBER, 1941

(*Map 6, page 95*)

(*Note: Milestones, or M.S., give mileage south from Alor Star town, Gurun being at M.S. 22.*)

The Gurun position, on the eastern flank of which the Battalion now found itself, is described in General Percival's Despatch as "perhaps the best natural defensive position on Malaya." It had been chosen in peace time, but none of the promised civilian labour force had appeared, and no work had been done on it, when the 11th Division arrived there on 14th December.

At Gurun town the main road and railway from the north converge into a defile between the towering massif of Kedah Peak (4,000 feet high and four miles south-west of Gurun) and a broken, jungly region at Bukit Kuang (three miles north-east of Gurun). The "East Road" by which the 2nd Battalion had arrived, continued as a by-pass road to join the road-net of the Harvard Estate to the south. A lateral road across the front divided the vast open paddy fields of central Kedah from the rubber forests of south Kedah. Unfortunately the Japanese air mastery prohibited the occupation of a front line commanding the open approaches. Forward posts had to be concealed in rubber groves with very short fields of fire, especially in the central defile.

The position was occupied with the 6th Brigade on the left and the 28th Brigade on the right. The weak 15th Brigade was in reserve a mile south of Gurun itself. In the 28th Brigade area the 2nd Battalion was in the centre with the 2/2nd on its right (its flank thrown back southwards) and 2/9th on its left, in touch with 2/16th Punjabis (6th Brigade), covering the railway line.

Work on the 2nd Battalion position in the Chempadak rubber estate continued until 2300 hours on the 14th, when wiring and weapon pits had been completed. With sentries posted the rest settled down to sleep on alarm positions, dreaming no doubt of the promised morning meal. This would be their first hot ration meal for four days, but alas! it was to be left untouched, just as it was about to be served at dawn.

A cryptic message arrived then from 28th Brigade H.Q., which merely read: "Move west." Colonel Fulton, assuming that something serious must have happened near Gurun, as indeed it had, lost no time in leading the Battalion off in that direction. With "D" Company back, he now had two strong companies, or about 250 men, in his fighting strength. Just before 0700 hours, at a point about half a mile north-east of Gurun, Colonel Selby appeared from his 2/9th G.R. H.Q. in the north and conferred with Colonel Fulton. Selby had also received a strange message saying: "All is lost; you are to withdraw to Brigade H.Q. at once." He was quite certain that all was not lost. The 28th Brigade, as far as he knew, had not even been engaged. He also knew that a 2/16th Punjabi company was still in position south of Guar Chempadak railway station, on his left. It was true that firing and sounds of battle could now be heard nearer Gurun, but he intended to see for himself at Brigade H.Q. what all the fuss was about. As senior officer on the spot he ordered 2/1st to stay put. The Battalion, therefore, took up a position on a spur half a mile north-east of Gurun, where it remained undisturbed and aloof from the serious events on the 6th Brigade front.

Another Japanese blitz of tanks and infantry had, in fact, broken through the defile front at 0300 hours and continued down the main road to reach Gurun by 0700 hours.

H.Q., 6th Brigade, had been overrun and wiped out except for Brigadier Lay himself, who alone escaped to 28th Brigade H.Q. to tell the tale of what he described as a completely lost brigade. Brigadier Carpendale's H.Q., 200 yards east of Gurun, was then heavily attacked and the Brigade Major (Bourne) was killed leading a counter-attack. Carpendale sent his Staff Captain off to hurry up the 2/2nd Gurkhas (already ordered towards Gurun) and also to send out orders for both 2/1st and 2/9th to close on Brigade H.Q., which was about to reopen half a mile farther west. (This was the origin of the messages received by Fulton and Selby.)

Fortunately the Japanese failed to exploit their initial success, thanks largely to the firm stand made by part of the East Surreys in the angle of the converging road and railway lines. The 6th Brigade was not, however, in such a bad state as its commander imagined. The 1/8th Punjabis had been overrun and also part of the East Surreys, but the 2/16th Punjabis had not been seriously engaged. However, the situation was grim enough. The enemy had punched a large gap in the defences between the main road,

inclusive, and Kedah Peak. Moreover, the 15th Brigade Commander had received alarming reports of disaster ahead and, as enemy mortar fire intensified on this front at 0930 hours, he decided to withdraw to the next bound allotted to him, on the Sungei Lalang (eight miles farther south).

General Murray-Lyon realized, from reports reaching his H.Q. at 0800 hours, that there had been a serious break-through and that the weak 15th Brigade could not hold for long. He quickly arranged:

- (1) To block the main road at the Tok Pawang stream, five miles south of Gurun, with 150 first reinforcements at hand and two anti-tank guns;
- (2) to rally the remnants of the 6th and 15th Brigades on the Sungei Lalang.

Then with his G.S.O.1 (Colonel A. M. L. Harrison) he motored up to the front to take personal control of the battle. At 28th Brigade H.Q. he found Brigadier Carpendale conferring with Colonels Selby and Woolcombe (2/2nd). He quickly realized that although 28th Brigade was still intact, it was isolated, with the main road behind only thinly held. He decided against a suggested counter-attack and issued orders at about 0930 hours for a general withdrawal, in a series of "lay-backs":

- (a) 2/2nd G.R. via Harvard Estate road, east of the railway, to the S. Tok Pawang (where reinforcement details had been directed);
- (b) 2/1st G.R. to follow 2/2nd G.R. to a position about M.S. 28, just north of Bedong;
- (c) Colonel Selby, with 2/9th G.R. and one company 2/16th Punjab under command, together with all East Surreys he could collect, to act as rear guard, using the same route. He was to withdraw any time after 1100 hours to a position behind the S. Lalang river (about M.S. 32).

There was some misunderstanding or delay in the issue of orders regarding (b), as by the time the 2/1st got orders to move at 1300 hours the 2/2nd had disappeared three hours earlier. Colonel Selby therefore included 2/1st in his rear-guard command. He had waited for some hours after 1100 hours in order to gather in all he could of the East Surreys and 2/16th Punjab. Eventually he raised a mixed collection about 1,000 strong, sent back the

East Surreys to join 2/2nd G.R., and decided to start the withdrawal at 1300 hours.

The 2nd Battalion spent a quiet morning and eventually moved off across country, by compass march, at 1400 hours to join the main body at the East Road one mile south-east of Gurun. One company 2/9th fought a brilliant west flank-guard action on the railway line, held out all day, then fought its way out after dark and eventually rejoined, with its gallant commander, Subedar Chembahadur, and seventy men, six days later. This action probably saved the rest of the rear guard, which was not followed up but found bridge after bridge prematurely blown up in its path.

At 1700 hours the main column, moving south through the Harvard Estate, reached a lateral road which joined the trunk road a mile to the west (at M.S. 26½). The 2/9th G.R. Carrier and Mortar Platoons, moving farther east, also reached this lateral road, but found themselves cut off in a river loop by demolished bridges both to the west and south. (One of these bridges is believed to have been destroyed by a fifth-column "officer's" orders as this "officer" could not later be traced or identified.)

All the trucks had then to be abandoned after being disarmed and smashed up. Colonel Selby then sent off Captain O'Neal of 2/1st on a motor cycle, with an armed truck as escort, to reconnoitre the trunk-road bridge over the S. Tok Pawang at M.S. 27. At 1730 hours O'Neal reported this intact and no sign of either friend or foe there. "D" Company of 2/1st was, therefore, put into a position near the cross-roads half a mile north of the bridge while the column crossed.

The road from Gurun in the north was completely open, but fortunately no enemy appeared to hinder the crossing.

The column marched on wearily southwards in the gathering dark, and near Bedong at 2200 hours found yet another bridge blown up in its path (near M.S. 30). This was fortunately crossable by infantry in single file, but the remaining M.T. vehicles had to be driven into the river and destroyed. It took over two hours to cross here, and it was not till 0100 hours on 16th December that the column at last found our own troops on the S. Lalang (M.S. 32) with the bridge actually unblown. Major W. J. Winkfield, with a 2/1st patrol, had just reached this bridge in time to stop the eager sapper's hand. Winkfield had undertaken the task of moving ahead of the column both to stop our own

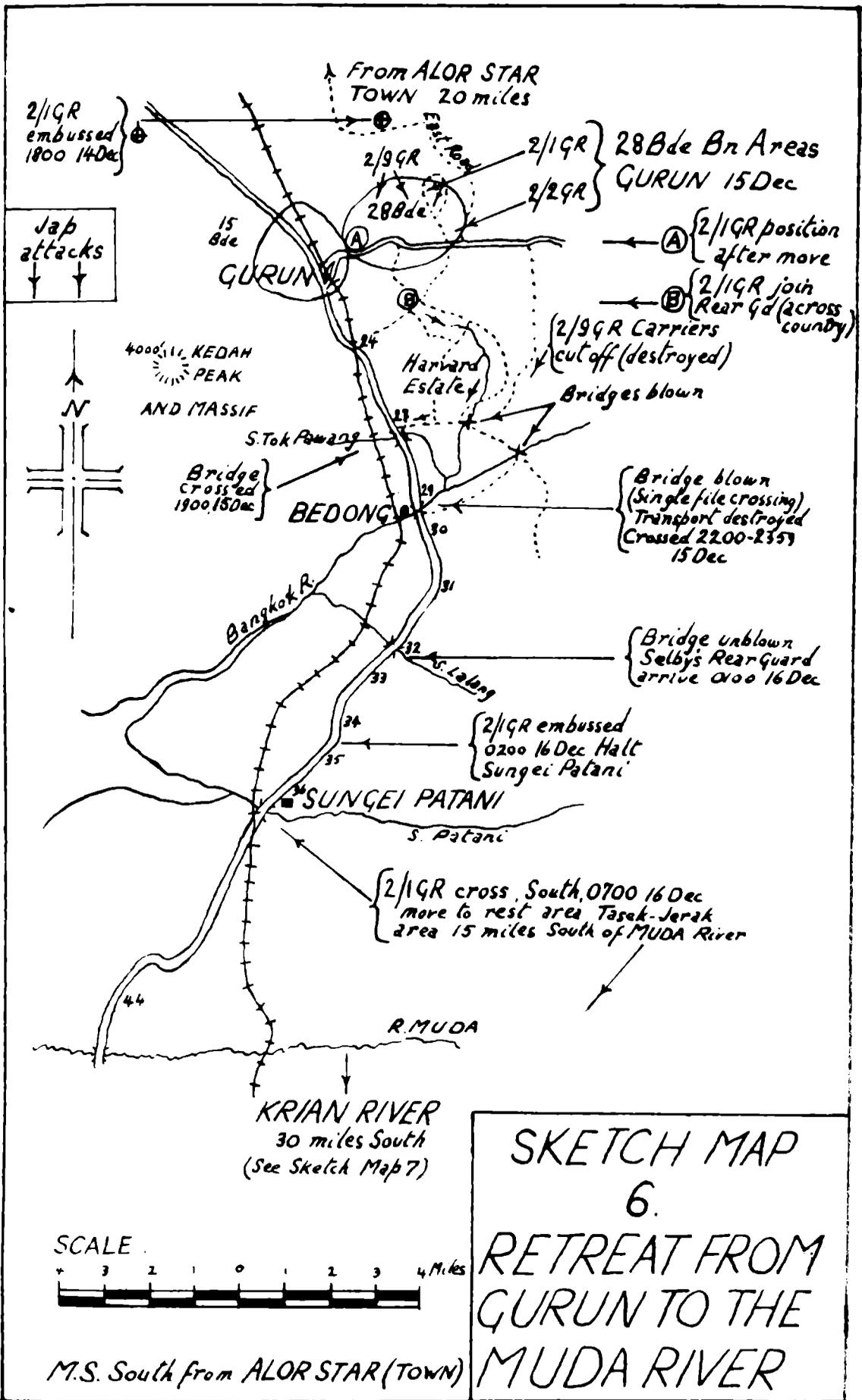
troops firing and to prevent premature demolitions. Colonel Fulton wrote later: "I stayed with the sapper to ensure that his jittery fingers did not stray to the exploder keys till we were all safely across. The clown then said we were all at a safe distance and the next minute I found myself under a shower of stones and brickbats—I took one on the hip which made me lame for several days. I told the sapper what I thought of him and proceeded in as dignified a manner as I could."

Still the march went on, but at last contact was made with Divisional H.Q. where, after long, anxious hours, the column had been given up as lost. At one time General Murray-Lyon had contemplated using a suicide rescue force, but had been persuaded that if anyone could extricate the column it was Colonel Selby himself, who would find a way round every obstacle. The whole column, indeed, owed much to Colonel Selby's leadership. As Colonel Harrison (G.S.O.1) writes: "Owing to the initiative and determination of Colonel Selby a thousand men, practically all of them armed, rejoined the Division."

M.T. was now sent for to pick up the weary column, 2/9th being embussed at M.S. 33 and 2/1st at M.S. 34½, barely two miles north of Sungei Patani, at 0200 hours.

2/2nd G.R. had meanwhile reached Sungei Patani via the East Road through Harvard Estate before the bridges there had been blown up. While the lost column had been making its way back the Divisional Commander had decided to withdraw the Division behind the River Muda, which was to be held by a mixed force of the Independent Company (a specially trained commando unit) and a squadron of 3rd Cavalry (unarmoured lorries) with a field regiment and an anti-tank battery in support. By this move he hoped to shake off the enemy for a few days and give the Division time for a much needed rest.

We shall not attempt to sort out the tangled move back of the Division during the early hours and morning of 16th December. It was just a repetition of the night of 13th/14th, already described. Mercifully the Japanese air force did not appear before the Division had settled down to rest behind the flimsy screen on the Muda River. The 2nd Battalion lorry column was held up in Sungei Patani for nearly an hour, so Captain Wylie took an empty lorry back to the S. Lalang bridge to pick up any remnants that might still be there. Some men had been falling by the way-side from sheer exhaustion and lack of sleep; others had been roused only with difficulty after each halt. A Battalion rear party



SKETCH MAP
6.
RETREAT FROM
GURUN TO THE
MUDA RIVER

had been moving along with hands joined across the road to sweep up the sleep-walkers and fallen, but inevitably a few had been left behind in the dark and rain. The men's exhaustion was understandable. In four and a half days they had fought at Asun, dug three positions, marched sixty-four miles with only one scrap meal thirty-six hours earlier, and had snatched only a few hours' uneasy sleep.

Road congestion of double-banked traffic made progress painfully slow, and at one time it took four hours to cover four miles.

III. THE RETREAT BEHIND THE MUDA AND KRIAN RIVERS

(*Map 7, page 99*)

At 0700 hours on 16th December the last troops, among them 2/1st and 2/2nd Gurkhas, crossed the S. Patani River, and the two bridges were blown up. Both units moved to a "rest area" in the Tasek-Jerak area, about fifteen miles south of the Muda River, in Wellesley Province. There "B" Echelon had laid on everything for a hearty meal on arrival at 1000 hours. It had been intended to halt here for a day and a night's rest, but at a Corps Commander's conference that morning it was decided to withdraw the Division at once behind the Krian River, roughly thirty miles south of the Muda. 12th Brigade Group, which had been falling back under pressure south-west from the Kroh front, was to take up successive positions on the eastern flank. 28th Brigade was to be railed back to Simpang Lima, five miles south of the Krian, that evening, preparatory to occupying the river line near the sea next day.

So at 1300 hours the Battalion marched off again to entrain at Jerak station for Simpang Lima. There at dusk it settled into billets in the village and at last everyone enjoyed a really peaceful night's sleep.

On 17th December advantage was taken of a quiet morning to reorganize the Battalion into Battalion H.Q. and four platoons (Signals, Anti-Aircraft, Mortars, and Administrative; Carriers and Pioneers being dispensed with) and three rifle companies, "A," "B" and "D," of equal strength. The total fighting strength had risen to about 320 of all ranks.

In Brigadier Carpendale's words: "Everyone was completely exhausted, the men just lay where they were without bothering to eat. During the last six days not many people had eaten one solid meal: when they tried to eat they were just sick."

The Krian position was to be held by the 28th Brigade near the sea, astride the trunk-road bridge at Nibong Tebal. There was an unbridged gap of some fifteen miles eastwards to the area to be occupied by 12th Brigade troops around Selama.

The 2nd Battalion marched out before noon to its allotted sector on the south bank of the tidal estuary: "A" Company (Captain W. G. Seaward) near Titi Serong, and "D" Company (Lieutenant C. Streatfeild) farther east. "B" Company (Subedar Dilbahadur Gurung) remained in reserve near Battalion H.Q. at Simpang Lima.

2/2nd G.R. moved up to the river line near Parit Buntar while 2/9th went back to Brigade Reserve at Bagan Serai, six miles south of Simpang Lima.

During 17th December all troops between the Muda and Krian Rivers were withdrawn to reserve in the Taiping area while 12th Brigade fell back on Selama. At midday on the 18th, Brigadier Carpendale held a commanding officers' conference at 2/2nd G.R. H.Q. in the local club at Parit Buntar. Just after everyone had assembled, nine Japanese aircraft swooped down, unloaded their bombs at low level, and flew off. One bomb crashed into the crowded conference room, but miraculously no one was hit, though several suffered from shock, including the Brigadier. Outside, the bombs did serious damage to a company of 2/2nd, which lost 11 killed and 26 seriously wounded. There is little doubt that a fifth columnist had indicated this target to the air by strips or other means.

During the 18th two strong escape parties reached the Krian River and were ferried over. One comprised the survivors of the 2/9th Jats, "B" Company, from Bt. Penia flank at Jitra, which, it will be recalled, had been joined by about sixty of 2/1st from Asun and other details.

C.H.M. Manbahadur Gurung, the hero of Asun bridge, was among the score of men who came in on the Krian. Appendix 4 includes Subedar Budhilal's story of how the original party of sixty was broken up in repeated ambushes and how he and three men regained our lines near Ipoh.

This Appendix also describes how another small party set sail from Kuala Kedah in a fishing boat and survived nine days of storm and starvation at sea. It reached Sumatra and eventually rejoined the Battalion in Singapore Island before the surrender.

On 18th and 19th December work on the river positions continued. It was a hopeless task in the flat, swampy ground, almost

flooded at each high tide. Captain Wylie found a motor boat on the 19th and cruised round destroying all the river craft he could find, accounting for three barges and twenty-four sampans.

On the 18th Brigadier Carpendale went sick and Lieutenant-Colonel (now Brigadier) Selby took over command of 28th Brigade. Both Brigadiers Lay and Garrett had also gone sick, and their two weak brigades, 6th and 15th, were amalgamated under Brigadier Moorhead in a rest area near Ipoh.

Certain units were also amalgamated, notably the Leicesters and East Surreys, to be known henceforth as "The British Battalion." On the 19th and 20th there was considerable enemy activity on the east of the Krian position and, to avoid being outflanked on its right, the 28th Brigade withdrew to the Bagan Serai canal line, after destroying the Krian River bridges. The 2nd Battalion closed on Simpang Lima on the afternoon of the 20th and early on the 21st took up positions on the south bank of the Bagan Serai canal, with 2/2nd G.R. on its left.

The Brigade did not stay there long, however, as the increasing threat to the Division's eastern flank and rear, via the Grik road, caused a further quick withdrawal across the Perak River that night.

During the 21st Jemadar Ramsaran and seventy first-line reinforcements joined the Battalion, bringing the strength up to just over 400.

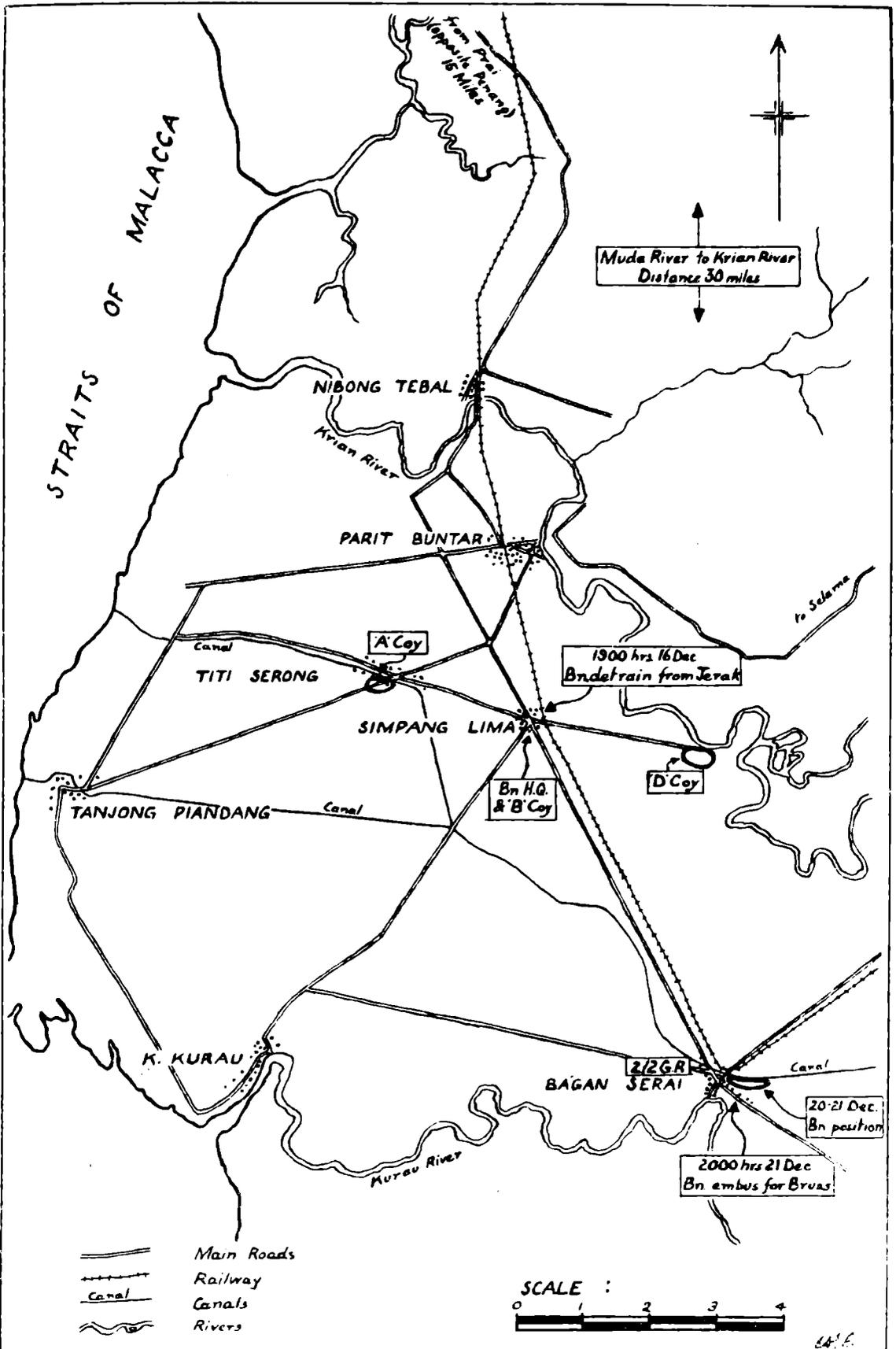
IV. THE PERAK RIVER OPERATIONS

(*Map 8, page 101*)

In the Divisional orders for the night withdrawal on 21st-22nd December 28th Brigade Group, less 2/1st G.R., was to move to positions near the main road and railway bridges over the Perak River above Kuala Kangsar, prepared to cover the withdrawal of 12th Brigade from the Grik road. The latter Brigade was to form part of 11th Division from midnight 21st/22nd.

2/1st was given a detached role under Divisional control (by W/T) west of the river to cover the Blanja pontoon bridge, which gave direct access from the coast road to the Ipoh area (twenty miles east of the river). Colonel Fulton was to have 10 Mountain Battery, one troop 2 Anti-Tank Battery, and 17 Field Company under his orders.

Accordingly, 2/1st G.R. group embussed after dark and drove south, past Taiping, to Bruas road junction (six miles west of Blanja bridge), arriving in the very early hours of 22nd December.



SKETCH MAP 7
KRIAN RIVER & BAGAN SERAI

L.A.F.

Dispositions covering the road junction were taken up soon after dawn. The day passed quietly, and a mobile detachment of 3rd Cavalry, which was operating on the coastal road north of Bruas, was not engaged.

As a result of further heavy fighting 12th Brigade Group withdrew across the Perak during the 22nd. By the morning of the 23rd the 2/1st G.R. and 3rd Cavalry Groups were the only troops west of the river. That morning the enemy started persistent bombing of the Blanja Bridge area. The Officer Commanding 3rd Cavalry group joined Colonel Fulton at 0800 hours. Together they considered their awkward position if the bridge were destroyed. At best it would mean the loss of all armed cars and vehicles, and a precarious crossing by troops in sampans over the largest river in Malaya. Divisional H.Q., on being consulted, ordered a withdrawal to the east bank that day.

The small force started off from Bruas road junction at 0900 hours, sending Major Winkfield ahead with all transport and recon parties to select positions on the east bank, and to get the vehicles across. The armed cars of 3rd Cavalry brought up the rear. The enemy meanwhile continued regular air attacks in flights of three twin-engined bombers on the bridgeheads every fifteen to twenty minutes. After unloading bombs the aircraft circled persistently over the road Blanja-Bruas on their way back to base, which, from the frequency of sorties, could not have been farther than Taiping (about twenty miles north).

At 1100 hours enemy dive-bombers joined in, making shallow dives up and down the road, but good air discipline and dispersion prevented any casualties. Meanwhile Major Winkfield had successfully "dribbled" the transport over the bridge to dispersed positions on the east bank.

Colonel Harrison (G.S.O.1 of 11th Division) writes:

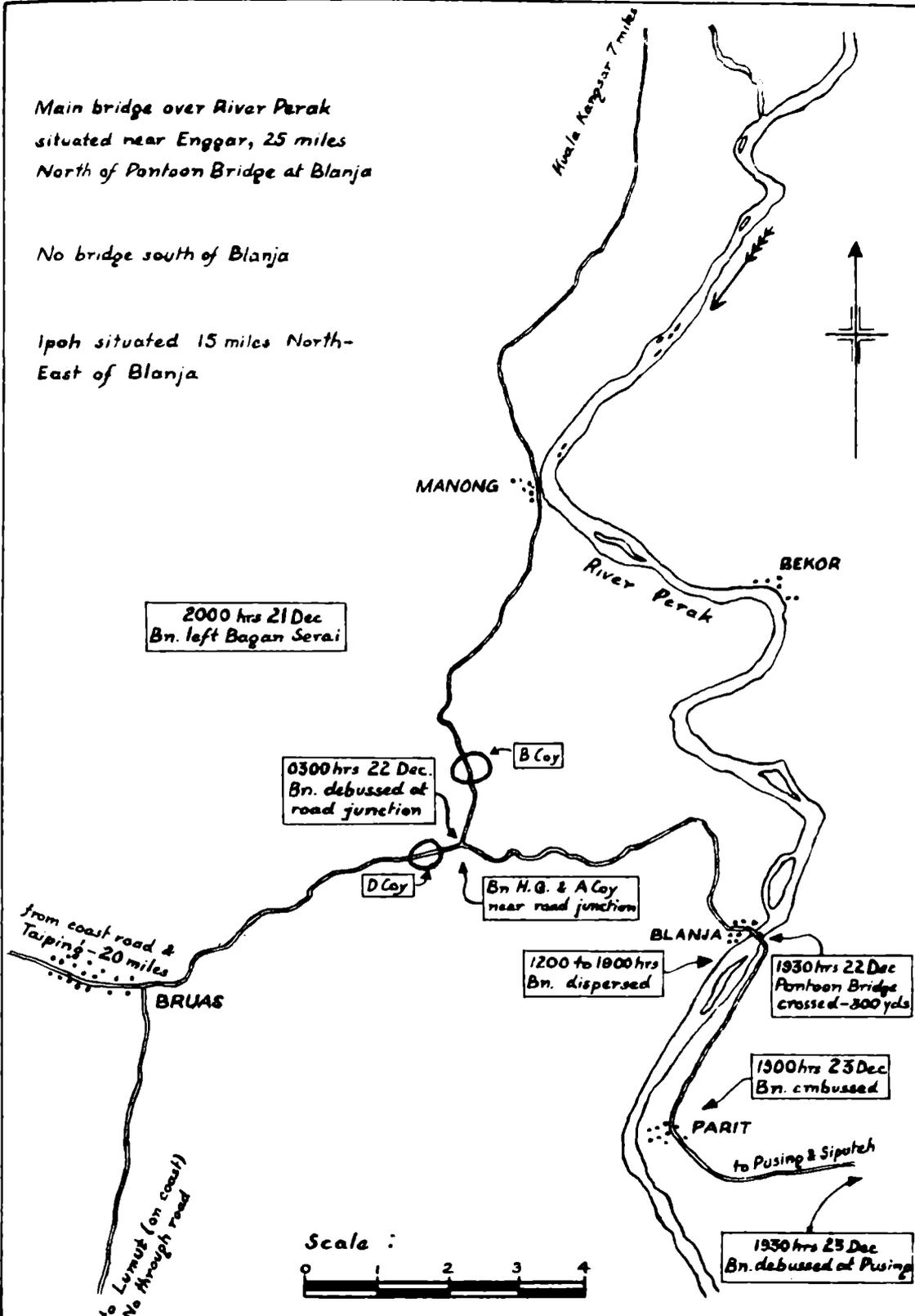
"With complete disregard for his own safety Major Winkfield personally supervised the crossing of every vehicle which he passed over the bridge singly. He then carried out a detailed reconnaissance of the Battalion's intended position in the heavily bombed area between the bridge and Parit (three miles east). Finally he recrossed the bridge under the fire of diving aeroplanes and reported to his C.O. Rifleman Kharakbahadur also performed gallant service, volunteering again and again to cross the bridge on his motor cycle to deliver messages to the squadron of 3rd Cavalry at Parit and to the transport lines on the east bank.

"It would have been suicidal for Colonel Fulton's main body

Main bridge over River Perak
situated near Enggar, 25 miles
North of Pontoon Bridge at Blanja

No bridge south of Blanja

Ipah situated 15 miles North-
East of Blanja



SKETCH MAP 8

BLANJA BRIDGE AREA

to cross the bridge in daylight. He therefore halted it and dispersed it on the west bank.

“ Throughout the day the sappers of 17th Field Company, led by Captain Bhagat, continued their preparations for the demolition of the bridge, despite constant attempts of the airmen to interrupt their work. Mercifully, casualties were small and occurred only in the squadron of 3rd Cavalry at Parit and in a newly arrived draft of 2/1st Gurkhas' reinforcements which had been held up on the east bank.”

(The draft mentioned above joined next day. It consisted of 2nd-Lieutenant E. W. Pennell, who returned to Brigade the same day, Subedar Mahabir Rana and twenty-five G.O.Rs.)

After dark on 23rd December the 2nd Battalion crossed the river unmolested and occupied a position covering the west end of the boat bridge, which was successfully breached by 17th Field Company. Eastward the remainder of 28th Brigade, travelling all through the night, had by dawn of the 24th reached the new positions west of Siputeh. There it was responsible for the protection of approaches from Blanja to the Division's L. of C. at Ipoh and Senlu (ten miles south-east of Ipoh). No one had any sleep that night.

On 24th December enemy air bombing started again early in the morning and continued until nearly dusk, concentrating mainly on the east-bank positions. There were no tools for digging, but dispersal and lying flat reduced casualties to one G.O.R. killed and three wounded. Other damage included a medium machine gun (direct hit), and several vehicles hit by bomb splinters or S.A.A. Repairs were carried out by “ cannibalizing ” a number of local M.T. vehicles (probably placed ready for Japanese use ?).

The draft had brought along two trucks armed with M.M.Gs. Two more M.M.Gs. were taken over from 2/2nd G.R., so a local lorry was commandeered to form a new four-gun M.M.G. Platoon.

At 1800 hours, on orders from Division, the Battalion marched about three miles to near Parit, which was in flames, and was lorried to Pusing, nine miles south-west of Ipoh, to come under 28th Brigade again. It took up a position at dusk covering tracks leading from Blanja to Pusing. The rest of the Brigade were covering approaches from Blanja on Ipoh. (*Map 9, page 109.*)

It was there that an interesting story emerged when a young rifleman was seen carrying two rifles.

It appeared that he had been wandering about near the west bank bridge-head at Blanja the day before when he came across a man in uniform who, as he put it, "was talking into a box" with his rifle lying close by. The rifleman asked him what he was doing and, on getting an unintelligible reply, he shot him and took his rifle. The victim was certainly a Japanese speaking to some H.Q. or air base and his elimination may well have saved the Battalion in its crossing that night.

By 24th December 12th Brigade had withdrawn to a position in depth between twelve and seventeen miles north of Ipoh. The Division had at last extricated itself before the Japanese trap had closed behind it. It had escaped, but of the three original brigades two had been shattered (and amalgamated) and one badly battered. The newly joined 12th Brigade had been engaged in continuous hard fighting and was near to breaking-point.

The Division's role was now to delay the enemy while the rested and reconstituted 15th Brigade, with 2/2nd G.R. and other details, prepared a strong defensive position at Kampar, twenty-three miles south of Ipoh. This position was to be firmly held, but meanwhile Corps were preparing a further rear position near the Slim River, forty-four miles south of Kampar.

The troops of the 11th Division as a whole were dead beat. The strain of continued night moves, with no rest from hostile aircraft by day, was adding its toll to the trials of the hurried retreat. But the nearest fresh troops, the 8th Australian Division, were nearly 300 miles in rear. The Army Commander had decided that he must retain this Division against the threat of new enemy landings on the east coast nearer Singapore.

At this stage the Japanese side of the picture may be of interest.

The 5th Division (Major-General Matsui), which had landed at Singora and Patani, had covered 200 miles in fifteen days. It had forced back the 11th Indian Division 160 miles from the frontier to the Perak River. The 11th and 41st Regiments of 9th Brigade and 21st Regiment of 21st Brigade had followed the western route from Singora via Jitra. The 42nd Regiment of 21st Brigade had struck from Patani via Kroh and Grik, being joined by part of 18th Division (Major-General Mudaguchi). (Each division had two brigades, each brigade two regiments and each regiment three battalions.)

The Imperial Guards Division (Major-General Nishimura) had landed at Singora on 13th December and was in action alongside 5th Division by the 21st. On arrival at the Perak River

the Japanese had two full divisions in line, a third coming up, a fourth advancing from Kota Bharu, and a fifth landing at Singora. In addition, the mixed armoured regiment had already proved a decisive element (particularly the Saeki Unit part of it) and it was to do so again.

There had been a continuous flow of Japanese reinforcements as well, so units were always at full strength. Although the same front-line divisions were to carry through to Singapore the brigades and regiments were frequently relieved and rested while fresh troops took up the fight. The Japanese stated later that reliefs of forward troops by fresh ones took place every thirty-six hours throughout the pursuit of the unfortunate 11th Indian Division.

On 24th December Major-General D. M. Murray-Lyon, who had commanded with such tireless energy and gallantry, handed over command of 11th Division to Major-General A. C. M. Paris (from 12th Brigade).

On 25th December the 2nd Battalion, in its position near Pusing, received a welcome Christmas present of one carrier, the first issue since all the carriers had been lost at Asun. The "quiet days" of the 24th and 25th were in fact no days of rest. The digging of positions, constant patrolling, enemy air activity, and reconnaissances of rear positions—all these prevented any real relaxation.

Major Winkfield and Captain O'Neal paid a Christmas visit to the Chenderiang Valley, east of Kampar, where the next position was to be. On 25th, too, volunteers were called for, from 28th Brigade, to form a special guerilla party which General Paris intended to organize for harassing the Japanese rear. Captain O'Neal was appointed commander and twenty volunteers were taken from each of the three Gurkha battalions. The Gurkha Gang, as this soon became known, departed for special training and patrol work up the Cameron Highlands road. Its doings will be recorded in due course.

On 26th and 27th December the 12th Brigade fought a delaying action ten miles north of Ipoh, while 28th Brigade began its move to the Dipang defile and the Chenderiang eastern loop-road, which were to form a deep defensive zone on the north and east of the Kampar position. (*Map 9, page 109.*)

The 2nd Battalion embussed at Pusing on the evening of the 26th and moved thirty-two miles, via Batu Gajah, thence east to Gopeng and south via Dipang, to a point half-way round the

eastern loop-road, about six miles east of Kampar town. The three days 27th to 29th were restful enough as only local protection was required. The opportunity was taken for smartening-up parades and special cadres while clothing and equipment were overhauled and renewed. Ten Lewis guns were received and issued to companies.

On 29th Subedar Budhilal and three men rejoined after following the retreat for 200 Jap-infested miles. His epic story is told in full in Appendix 4.

Meanwhile, the rest of 28th Brigade had been preparing positions in the Dipang defile, five miles north of Kampar.

Six miles farther north the 12th Brigade had occupied a delaying position in depth near Gopeng, and repulsed a strong attack on the 29th. It was withdrawn, in the face of gathering Japanese strength, during the night of 29th/30th to Bidor, some twenty miles south of the Kampar position. It had borne the brunt of the last week's fighting, had fought well and hit back, but it had suffered severely and needed rest.

The Japanese check on the Kedah River had not lasted as long as had been hoped. The bridge at Blanja had been quickly repaired and a whole division passed across to the Ipoh area by the 27th. With the 12th Brigade back at Bidor the scene is set for the Battle of Kampar.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FROM PERAK TO JOHORE

(Map 9, page 109)

I. THE BATTLE OF KAMPAR

(Note : Milestones, or M.S., are southward from Ipoh.)

THE position around Kampar was occupied by the 28th Brigade in a right forward area near Dipang and by the 15th Brigade near Kampar itself. The latter had enjoyed ten days in which to reorganize, rest, and prepare its positions. The 28th Brigade positions had been prepared by 2/2nd G.R. and 23 Field Company, R.E. Local labour which had been assembled to help in both areas had quickly vanished as soon as a few Japanese bombs had fallen. The defences were, however, in a better state than at either Jitra or Gurun.

On 30th December the 2nd Battalion was removed from the 28th Brigade to join a small force near Temoh railway station, five miles south of Kampar. This force was under Lieutenant-Colonel Stokes, of 5/14th Punjab, and included his own unit and 7 Mountain Battery, both of which had been hurried to Temoh on the 30th from the Perak River estuary at Telok Anson. Stokes's detachment had been posted there, with the Independent Company, against the ever-increasing threats of Japanese coastal landings, which would strike in rear of the Kampar position. It was known that there was at least one reserve Japanese division in South Kedah and in Penang, where large numbers of coastal craft had unfortunately been left undestroyed when the Island was surrendered.

From the 29th the 12th Brigade had been given the task of moving to Telok Anson if landings appeared imminent.

The 2nd Battalion marched about ten miles south from its loop-road area to reach Temoh station at dusk on the 30th, after lying up in a concealment area two miles west of it most of the day. On arrival it was found that Stokes's force was to be prepared to

engage or counter-attack any enemy working southward from the Pusing area to cross the swampy Kinta Valley near the Cicely Estate, some five miles on the west flank of the Kampar position.

During the 31st, therefore, Colonel Fulton and other officers reconnoitred and blazed a trail through the rubber plantations about two miles westwards to M.S. 29 on the main road from Kampar to Ct. Jong. This trail led in the general direction of the threatened Cicely Estate, where the ferry was held by a party of 2/16th Punjab (holding the south-west face of the Kampar position) with Volunteer armoured cars in support. During the 31st, Japanese parties amounting to about a company crossed near the ferry and forced the Punjabis and Volunteers back on Kampar.

Elsewhere that day the Japanese increased the pressure which had started the day before on Dipang, but again made no progress. The Despatch says: "the Gurkhas, who were fighting in country suited to their well-known qualities, proved themselves superior to the Japanese and, ably supported by 155 Field Regiment, inflicted heavy losses on the enemy." This action, far away from the 2nd Battalion at Temoh, is only cited to show what the 28th Brigade could do when given a chance.

On 15th Brigade front round Kampar all was quiet. There was some minor trouble up the Cameron Highlands road, where fifth columnists had organized disturbances and mob law. Some of the agitators rashly adopted an aggressive attitude to Captain O'Neal's Gurkha Gang, then based about fifteen miles up the road from Tapah, and were made to regret it.

The New Year of 1942 dawned with a determined attack on the main Kampar position, and heavy fighting went on all day, particularly on the British Battalion's front on the right. Consequent on overnight reports of Japanese activity in the Cicely Estate, Colonel Stokes moved his force at midnight 31st December/1st January, 1942, to Kampar-Ct. Jong road, disposing 5/14th near M.S. 27 and 2/1st near M.S. 28 (Kampar being at M.S. 24) by dawn. A company of 2/2nd G.R. under Captain A. C. Dallas-Smith arrived early in the morning to come under command of the 2/1st, and remained so until 4th January. No signs of any enemy could be found by patrols to the west, and the day passed peacefully.

On 2nd January the enemy renewed his attacks north of Kampar, mainly on the British Battalion again, and met with fierce resistance. Japanese accounts say that both the 5th and Guards Divisions were engaged, "but in spite of all they could do they were unable

to break through." The enemy had also fought shy of tackling the Gurkhas again in the Dipang defile. But events now in progress on the coast were to have a decisive influence on the battle. As early as the night 1st/2nd a Japanese convoy had been spotted off the Bernam River estuary twenty miles south-west of Telok Anson. Next evening enemy troops started landing there, and at dawn on the 2nd a battalion landed at Telok Anson, followed by a complete regiment. The threatened sea-borne operations had in fact begun and the 12th Brigade went into action towards Telok Anson.

The Kampar position was being engaged by two divisions in front and threatened by a third in rear. A deliberate withdrawal was therefore ordered for the night 2nd/3rd January. On the loop-road east of Kampar the 28th Brigade had been thinned out the night before by the withdrawal of 2/2nd G.R., less the company with 2/1st, to the Slim River area, forty-four miles south of Kampar, to guard this part of the L. of C. against further landings.

2/9th G.R. had withdrawn to the Jabus Mine area, due east of Kampar, whence it was to fall back after 2300 hours to Tapah (M.S. 37).

The 15th Brigade were to start withdrawal at 2100 hours and to embus south of Kampar, covered by Stokes's Force disposed with 5/14th Punjabis about Kg. Talam (two miles from Kampar) and 2/1st Gurkhas around Temoh.

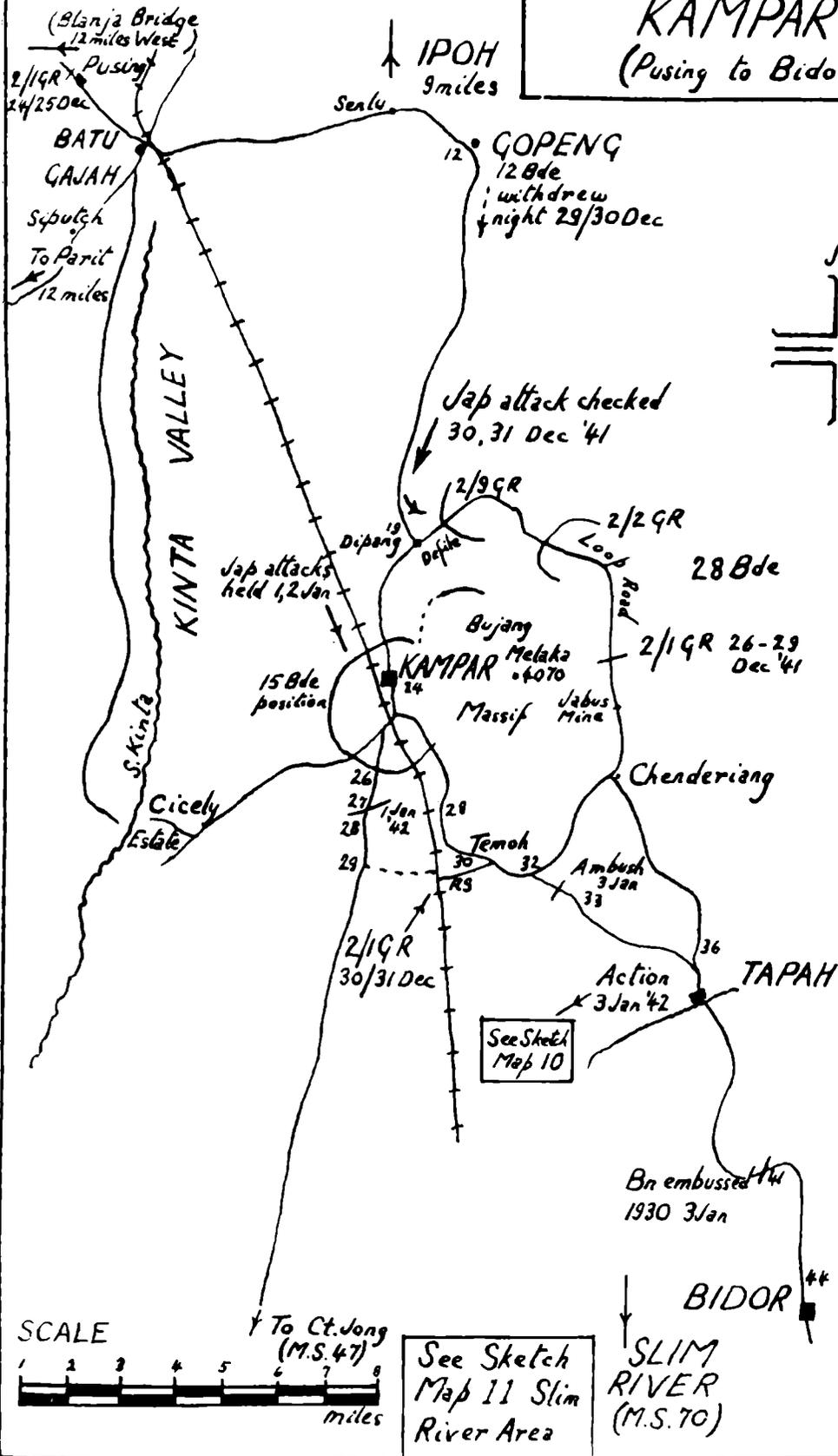
The 2nd Battalion therefore found itself retracing its steps along the blazed trail and back to Temoh by dusk on the 2nd. Transport had been sent off two hours earlier to rejoin by the southern road via Ct. Jong to avoid the shorter route through the constantly shelled outskirts of Kampar.

The bridge near M.S. 37 was found demolished, however, and the transport had to turn back and run the gauntlet through the shelled area, but did this without loss.

Soon after dark the Battalion was disposed north of Temoh in successive positions astride the road from M.Ss. 29 to 31. By midnight the 15th Brigade had embussed and passed through. Between 0200 and 0500 hours the 5/14th were heavily engaged but beat off all attacks and were not followed up when they withdrew through 2/1st to another position near M.S. 31½. The 2nd Battalion then withdrew without incident and marched through to occupy part of the next 28th Brigade rear-guard position in front of Tapah (M.S. 37) by 1000 hours.

Before we consider the action at Tapah we may mention that

DIAGRAM SKETCH MAP 9 KAMPAR (Pusing to Bidon)



O'Neal's Gurkha Gang had been recalled from the Cameron Highlands road to join 2/9th Gurkhas at Tapah. It had started training on 27th December and then had half its men recalled to units on the 29th. It was just getting busy with patrolling and plans for an ambush on the road when it was ordered back.

The unfortunate Gang was now to be pushed about from pillar to post on odd jobs without being given a chance to take on the role for which it had trained so eagerly. It will reappear in our story from time to time.

II. THE ACTION AT TAPAH, 3RD JANUARY, 1942

(Map 10, page 111)

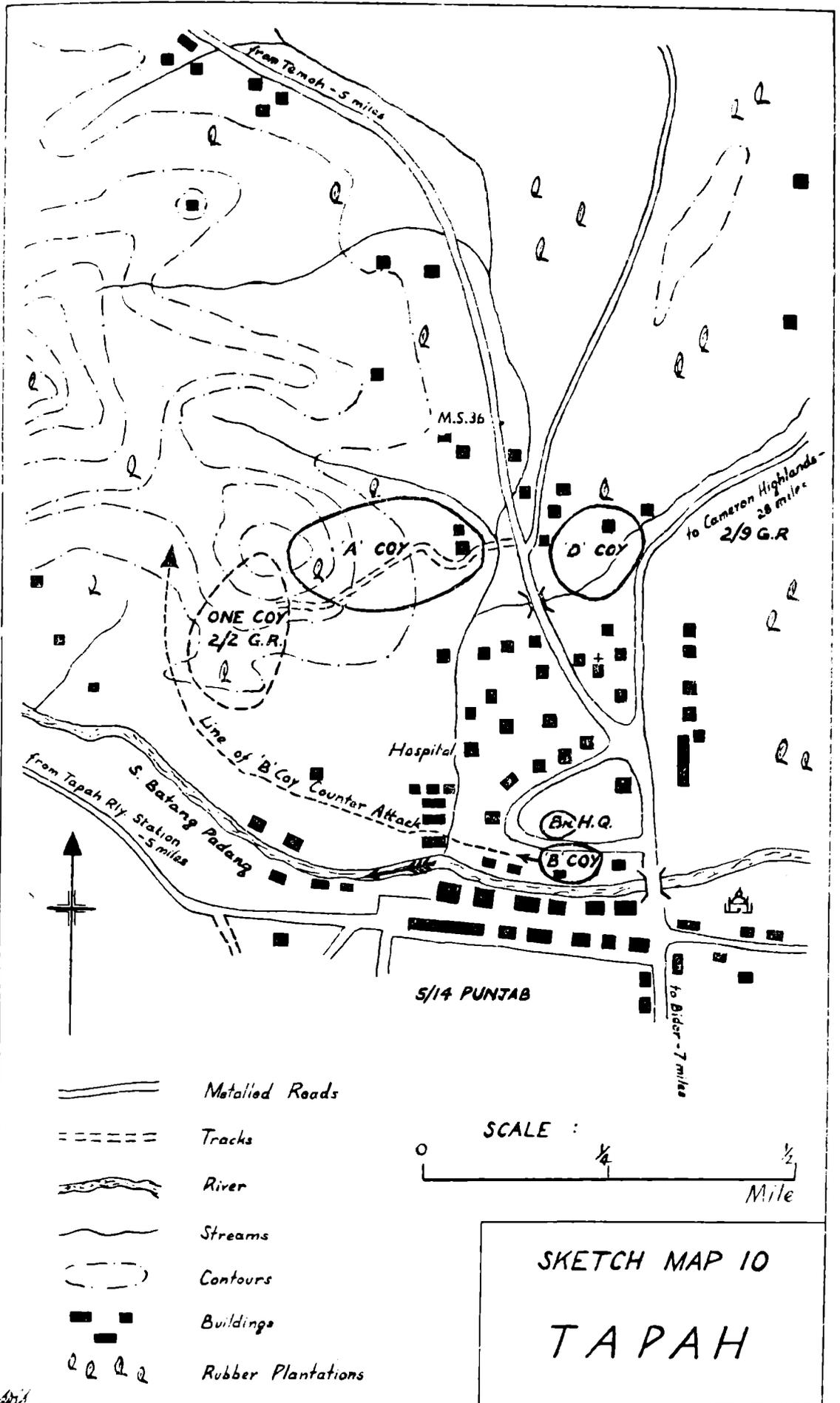
The rear-guard position at Tapah was occupied with 2/1st on the left, including roads from Kampar and the north, and 2/9th on the right, including the Cameron Highlands road.

A 2/1st ambush party, of two Bren carriers mounting M.M.Gs., was left in concealment behind a bridge three and a half miles along the Kampar road, at M.S. 32½. This bridge was destroyed at 1100 hours when 5/14th Punjabis had passed through to their reserve position south of Tapah. At about noon a party of about sixty unarmed Japanese carrying tools and timber arrived on the north bank. The party was allowed to bunch up close to the bridge before both M.M.Gs. opened fire with devastating effect, very few of the enemy escaping. The carriers waited for more targets, but soon, finding themselves the targets of Japanese mortars, they withdrew, blowing another bridge on their way back to Tapah. (Note: Divisional H.Q. were jubilant on receipt of a message that 600 Japs had been laid out, until it was discovered that a gratuitous "0" had been added in transmission. But the joy was hardly less for the sixty.)

The company areas occupied by the Battalion in front of Tapah are shown on Map 10.

Two Japanese cyclists were the first to approach the position, at 1445 hours, and these were promptly laid low. Then about a company approached "D" Company through rubber trees east of the Kampar road and halted while an officer consulted a map and called up leaders. When these were well bunched, "D" Company opened a sudden burst of automatic fire which dropped many and scattered the rest.

For the next forty minutes the enemy continued to deploy and widen the front of his attack over what was ideal killing ground



for both the forward companies and 22 Mountain Regiment in support. By 1530 hours the expected outflanking movement, round the 2/2nd G.R. company on the left, began to develop. "B" Company, under Subedar Mahabir Rana, specially teed up for just this move, was at once launched round the west flank in a highly successful counter-attack. Mahabir's men arrived at the right moment, closed with the enemy and routed them after a grenade battle.

Orders had arrived meanwhile for forward battalions to withdraw behind the 5/14th position on the south bank of the river, 2/1st to clear the bridge in Tapah at 1600 hours. There was just time to rally the counter-attack and pull back the forward companies according to plan. The enemy were cautiously approaching the demolished bridge when the 5/14th withdrew at dusk.

It had been a grand day for the Battalion and its attached company of 2/2nd Gurkhas. They had all enjoyed some wonderful shooting and collected a bumper bag. The men were in high spirits as they marched about four miles back to embus near M.S. 41. The only casualty of the day was one G.O.R. wounded. Captain O'Neal and his Gurkha Gang happened to join the column near Tapah and heard much jubilant talk and capping of yarns about the hundreds of enemy the various groups had killed.

On the Ct. John front, between Telok Anson and Bidor, 12th Brigade had disengaged after stiff fighting during 3rd January to join in the general rearward move of the Division that night. There was another complete chaos of traffic congestion, the column moving (as Colonel Harrison writes) at three paces: Slow, Very Slow, and Stop.

Brigade Group destinations were :

- (a) 28th Brigade—the Slim River position, near Slim River village (*Map 11, page 123.*)
- (b) 12th Brigade—the advanced or Trolak Sector of (a) from M.S. 60 to 64.
- (c) 15th Brigade—a temporary covering position at Sungkai, twelve miles north of (b); withdrawn on night 4th/5th to Tanjong Malim, seventeen miles south of (a), thence to Batang Berjuntai to meet a new threat from Japanese landings in the Selangor River estuary.

The scene was thus set for the disastrous battle at Slim River a few days later, but first we must pick up the Gurkha Gang's doings.

THE GURKHA GANG—WOULD-BE GUERILLAS

This had assembled, sixty strong and full of hope, as we have seen, in an estate about thirteen miles up the road from Tapah to the Cameron Highlands on 27th December. It consisted of Captain O'Neal, in command; Lieutenant Hewitt of 2/9th; Lieutenant Doughty, Private Hughes and Private Kelway, all of the Federated Malay States Volunteer Force; and two civilians with knowledge of the country and languages. O'Neal was told to take ten days in which to train and to explore the country and then to be prepared to operate in the Japanese rear towards Ipoh (north-westwards). All seemed set for some exciting and useful work. Then, on the 29th, came the first blow—an order to return half the men to their units. The Gang's task was then altered to: (1) observation of the area near M.S. 19 (from Tapah) and thence to Gopeng; (2) a fighting withdrawal if the enemy came their way.

The Gang therefore moved back to M.S. 19 and got in touch with 3rd Cavalry near Tapah. On 1st January the Gang was pulled back to M.S. 7 to cover a road demolition to be blown next day. An elaborate ambush was planned here, on which great hopes were set, but before the enemy appeared the Gang was recalled to join 2/9th Gurkhas at Tapah.

Its meeting with the Battalion, flushed with its success in the action, has already been recorded. The guerilla role seemed to have vanished in the surge of events. During the night 3rd/4th it was given traffic-control duties at two bridges (M.S. 55 and 68), where it vainly attempted to sort out the chaotic rearward move already mentioned. After a day's rest at Trolak on the 5th the Gang moved to Kuala Kubu, thirty miles south of the Slim River, where it was promised a new lease of active life. However, this was not to be. Events were moving too fast.

The same coastal threat which drew the 15th Brigade towards the Selangor River now diverted the Gang to Kerling, a few miles north of Kuala Kubu. It was feared that the enemy might infiltrate here by jungle tracks via the Selangor and Kerling River routes and so reach the L. of C.

These events do not directly concern our story but they throw a sidelight on the general situation, and we shall here carry the Gang's tale rather ahead of the main narrative. On 6th and 7th January it patrolled vigorously along the approaches from the coast but found no signs of any enemy. It was then offered to the 15th Brigade, who passed it on unused to its "parent" 28th Brigade by the evening of the 8th. That was the end of the Gang

as such. The men were now urgently required with their own sadly depleted units, as we shall soon see.

O'Neal was to carry out one last mission with his own 2/1st party only, as will be told in its place. It was a sorry end to a promising idea which had been conceived too late. In other theatres guerillas achieved important effects in fostering resistance movements, but years were to pass before Force 136 could come into action in Malaya (see Chapter Nine).

III. THE SLIM RIVER DISASTER

(Map 11, page 123)

THE PRELUDE

(Note: Milestones, or M.S., show mileage south of Ipoh. Slim River village is at M.S. 70 and is not to be confused with Slim town at M.S. 76.)

The 4th January saw all units of the 28th Brigade settling into the Slim village area more or less in peace except for enemy aircraft constantly overhead, searching for targets. The troops were well hidden, but all the roads and the railway line were subjected to frequent air attacks.

The 2nd Battalion arrived at dawn and chose a bivouac area between the road and railway south of M.S. 69. The attached company of 2/2nd Gurkhas went back to its own unit, which had arrived there two days earlier.

2/9th G.R. and 5/14th Punjab also settled into rest areas west of the road. Farther north the 12th Brigade occupied the Trolak Sector with its three battalions in depth, between M.S. 60 and 64. With the withdrawal of the 15th Brigade that night to Tanjong Malim (M.S. 92) the 12th Brigade was in the front line again.

During the period 4th to 6th January the 28th Brigade units were undisturbed. Most of the men just ate, slept, and wallowed in the river, but officers had a busy time doing reconnaissances of their deployment areas, which were constantly changed. The 12th Brigade made repeated southward extensions of its area, each of which entailed fresh lay-outs and visits, attended by enemy aircraft. The 28th Brigade had a final counter-order on the 6th. Its forward limit was to be Slim village and rearward limit the Slim River bridge at the town near M.S. 76.

Final deployment areas were therefore allotted as follows :

2/9th G.R. on the high ground north of the road bend at M.S. 70; 2/2nd G.R. in the area of the railway bridge and the Tilau Estate road farther west;

2/1st G.R. in a rear area at Cluny Estate, north of M.S. 73.

5/14th Punjab was removed from the 28th to the 12th Brigade command and was given a deployment area near M.S. 65 (rather ominously marked as the Cemetery) but remained at Slim village.

To understand what happened on 7th January we shall need to outline the Divisional plan and the final lay-out of the forward brigade. General Paris intended the Slim River area as a whole—comprising both the Trolak and Slim Sectors—to be only a delaying zone in depth, as a buffer in front of the main position at Tanjong Malim.

It was hoped to hold the Trolak Sector for three days after first contact, when the 12th Brigade would withdraw through the 28th, which in turn was expected to hold the Slim Sector for one day only.

The 12th Brigade finally disposed its units with 4/19th Hyderabad between M.S. 60 and 61, 5/2nd Punjab thence to M.S. 62 and 2nd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (2nd A and S.H.) thence to M.S. 64 and including the Tilau Estate road.

The 5/14th Punjab area at M.S. 65 has already been mentioned. Four battalions were thus to be sited in depth along five miles of road forming a kind of defile with very broken or jungly country on either side. There were three anti-tank guns in the first two unit sub-areas, and one field battery in action with two more undeployed as far back as the Cluny Estate (M.S. 73).

Forward units had a number of concrete anti-tank blocks and some had a few anti-tank mines, but there were only four anti-tank rifles in the whole Slim area.

On 5th January the Japanese made contact with the Trolak front and developed a strong attack near the railway. This was repulsed with heavy enemy losses and was followed next day by an ominous inactivity, apart from sporadic shelling and bombing. The 12th Brigade Commander (Brigadier Stewart) attributed this to the knock taken by the enemy the day before. The Divisional Commander was not so sure and decided that he would withdraw the 12th Brigade after another day—i.e., on the night 7th/8th January. He vetoed Brigadier Selby's suggestion to deploy the 28th Brigade units overnight (6th/7th) as one more night's rest would make all the difference to them.

He told Selby to deploy by noon on the 7th as the 12th Brigade should have no difficulty in holding an attack for one day.

155 Field Regiment, R.A., still well in rear of the Slim River bridge at M.S. 76, was also not to deploy till noon on the 7th.

The eve-of-battle scene is thus set.

On that day, the 6th, the 2nd Battalion mustered 9 British officers, 16 Gurkha officers, 430 ranks and 63 followers (including " B " Echelon and sick in hospital).

The numbers which actually marched out at Slim next day amounted to about 300 Gurkha ranks, with about 130 in rear, in transport echelons or sick. Reinforcements elsewhere in Malaya amounted to one British officer, one Gurkha officer and seventy-one ranks. One more Bren carrier had been received, giving No. 4 Platoon a total of three.

THE DISASTER

At 0345 hours on 7th January, 1942, the Japanese suddenly let loose another " Asun blitz," this time in broad moonlight straight down the road. It was led by fifteen medium tanks followed by infantry in lorries and more tanks. Its destructive career resembled that at Asun, but this time it was to shatter five battalions, involve two more in semi-disaster, and create a shambles along nineteen miles of road.

We cannot follow its whole disastrous course in detail. A short outline must suffice to show how the 2nd Battalion was crushed from behind, without any warning, and irretrievably scattered into the jungle.

The van of the blitz succeeded in clearing the tank blocks in the first unit sub-area (4/19th) and crashed on. In the second sub-area (5/2nd) the leading tank struck a mine and some thirty tanks piled up behind it. At a cost of seven tanks knocked out and two hours' delay the blitz surged on.

The unit in the third sub-area (2nd A and S.H.) got no warning and could do little more than impose delay, though flank companies held out near both the main and Tilau roads.

The next unit to be struck was the 5/14th Punjab, which had been ordered to march from near Slim village at 0715 hours to the Cemetery area. It had covered only a mile when, near M.S. 67, it was borne down without warning and scattered while still in column of route.

The 28th Brigade units, in total ignorance of what had been happening, were then falling in unconcernedly near their bivouacs

to move out to their areas in accordance with Brigade orders issued at about 0650 hours. The reason for their move at this exact time needs some explanation. At 0630 hours Divisional H.Q. received a vague message, sent off by motor-cycle D.R. from the 12th Brigade at 0530 hours, of "some sort of a break-through," so issued immediate orders for the 28th Brigade to deploy. It appears that wireless communication from the 12th Brigade had failed, but nothing seems to have been done to liaise with the unfortunate 28th Brigade in rear.

The deploy order was received by the 28th Brigade about 0645 hours and was passed on to units five minutes later.

It seems incredible that no one in the 12th Brigade thought of warning the 28th Brigade, which was close in rear and not due to deploy before noon. It is the irony of fate that the Divisional order served only to put the 5/14th and the 2/1st on the road at exactly the moment the Japanese blitz could strike them worst. Half an hour's difference, either way, might have changed their fates.

The 2/2nd Gurkhas were luckily placed well clear of the main road, and out of the track of the blitz. The 2/9th Gurkhas were also lucky, at the outset; they received due warning of hostile tanks approaching from a 5/14th officer, a Gunner and a truck driver, as they crossed the road at 0730 hours to their area on the north. Their tail cleared the road just in time.

The 2nd Battalion left bivouacs at 0710 hours to march eastwards down the road, and passed the 5/14th going the other way. It rounded the road bend near M.S. 70 at 0720 hours, making for the Cluny Estate, three miles farther on. Colonel Fulton had left half an hour earlier on a motor-cycle pillion, followed by company reconnaissance parties in a truck, to look over the position at the Cluny Estate. The Battalion was therefore marching under Major W. J. Winkfield. The rest of the story is best told in his, and the Adjutant's, words.

Major Winkfield writes :

"I was marching in the centre of the Battalion which was in open file along the sides of the road, leaving the roadway clear. As an air-raid precaution I had ordered it to march widely spaced with fifty yards between platoons. We had marched about a mile (nearing M.S. 71) when I sensed a feeling of unease behind me. I couldn't understand it. True, the noise of battle sounded a bit closer, but we were nearly twelve miles behind the front and there were no hostile aircraft about. The men behind me were looking

back and hurrying. They kept pressing so I sent Wylie (Adjutant) back to tell them to keep their distance.

“The next thing I knew was a gun and M.G. blazing in my ear, a bullet grazed my leg, and I dived into the ditch as a tank bore down on me. It had passed through half my Battalion without my realizing anything was amiss.

“The tanks, about a dozen of them, stopped for ten minutes firing into the rubber groves which flanked the road before they moved on. It was a terrifying experience. When it seemed clear that no more were coming I crawled out to order the Battalion to move on. It had vanished!

“After a further search, which only discovered a few more men, wounded, dead, or dying in the rubber near the road, I pushed on to the Cluny Estate and found two batteries destroying their guns there. I waited there for some time hoping that the survivors of the Battalion would make for the position, but no one appeared, so I pushed on towards Tanjong Malim. I found our transport lines a shambles on my way back. Eventually, after swimming the Slim River, in view of the presence of tanks on the bridge (M.S. 76), I found 155 Field Regiment in action on the road (about a mile south of the bridge).”

Captain C. G. Wylie writes :

“On being ordered back by Major Winkfield I marched to the rear of the Battalion, passing on his orders to the troops. I was surprised to see some British troops setting fire to a carrier which was ditched but could obviously have been recovered. I also noticed an Indian sepoy running down the road overtaking our men, and told him not to run. A moment later a tank appeared round a bend about twenty yards away firing a machine gun. I ran to the cover of some bushes and as I did so the tank fired a grenade which burst three yards in front of me. Two men directly in front of the burst fell forward and remained motionless.

“More tanks followed. I lay down ten yards away from the leading tank and could hear the crew relaying orders shouted by the commander. After about ten minutes the tanks moved on. Some men lay dead on the road and some had been wounded, so I ordered some men near me to dress their wounds while I burnt codes and messages. I then searched for the Battalion and had collected about forty men when a second batch of tanks arrived. The men were scattered to cover again by the suddenness of this violent attack, feeling quite helpless against it (the Battalion had no anti-tank rifles nor any missiles of any kind).

“ After a while I took the men I had collected some way through the rubber and jungle, then organized them in an all-round defensive position. Leaving the Subedar-Major in charge, I took a patrol down to the road, which I found still being patrolled by enemy tanks. I recovered six more of our men and rejoined the S.M.’s party. There I found a private of the Argylls, who said that his company was half a mile away. He led me to it and I found Captain Bardwell there, who said there had been a breakthrough at Trolak, and that 12th Brigade had been withdrawn.

“ We decided to join forces and make for Tanjong Malim. We started off about 1700 hours, avoiding the bridge, as we assumed (wrongly) it would have been destroyed. After a brush with tanks on the road (during which S.M. Dalbahadur and several men got separated) we crossed the Slim River farther east with some difficulty. It was in spate and we had to swim across using a chain of rifle slings to help us and dragging over the non-swimmers. During the night a number of men got separated, strayed or fell from exhaustion, others struggled on.

“ Next morning I joined forces with Lieutenant-Colonel Deakin (5/2nd Punjab) and we reached Tanjong Malim at dawn on the 8th to find it in Japanese hands. Three days later I reached the coast south of Kuala Selangor (seventy miles from Slim village) with Lieutenant-Colonel Collins (R.A.M.C.) in an effort to try and escape by boat to Sumatra. However, we were given away by Tamils, surrounded by Japs while asleep in a hut, and were taken prisoner.

“ After the first batch of tanks had passed through the Battalion it was obvious that the enemy controlled the road and the Battalion could no longer march on the road. Troops therefore left the road and entered the jungle on the north of the road. (To the south was the Slim River.) Owing to the fact that the Battalion was marching well dispersed at the time of the tank attack, sub-units and groups found themselves isolated in the jungle without means of intercommunication or of receiving orders. Thus Group Commanders—in many cases young N.C.Os.—had to appreciate a difficult situation and act accordingly on their own initiative. Some tried to reach the R.V. for the Battalion; but it was difficult to know just where this was as the recce party and guides, which were supposed to be at the R.V., had been shot up and dispersed by the tanks. Others took up positions where they were, expecting an attack by lorry-borne infantry, such as had followed the tanks in the attack at Asun, 11th December, 1941. Others continued

moving parallel to the road in the hope of eventually overtaking the Japs—as the Battalion had successfully done on three occasions previously during the campaign (Asun, Jitra, Gurun).

“ I would like to emphasize that the Battalion had no anti-tank weapons or missiles (Molotov cocktails or grenades) whatsoever; also the suddenness and violence of the tank attack and the unexpectedness of their appearance when the Battalion was supposed to be at least ten miles behind the front, came as a complete surprise.

“ After my capture I was taken by the Japs from Malacca to Taiping by road. Two points I noted may be of interest :

- (i) Leaving Malacca on 16th January we passed a Jap armoured column and counted seventy tanks.
- (ii) Passing the scene of the action at Slim River, the bodies of Battalion dead were still where they had fallen—many mere smudges in the road where they had been run over by tanks and M.T. The stench of death was so great as to suggest many bodies lay in the bushes where they had taken cover originally.”

Before summing up the results of the battle and discussing the fates of the various isolated parties, we must give another impression of the battlefield.

Colonel Harrison, G.S.O.1 of the 11th Division, has written a graphic account of the scene at Slim River that day. Some of his experiences are included here as they throw much light on events long wrapped in mystery. The Colonel paid a perilous visit to the front as soon as he had seen the 12th Brigade “ break-through ” message and had dictated orders for the 28th Brigade to deploy.

Motoring up from Tanjong Malim, he ran into the first enemy tanks near M.S. 73 and miraculously escaped by throwing himself out of his riddled car. After the road cleared (for a while) he accosted a British Gunner motor-cyclist, who said he had come from Cluny Estate close by. Sounds of a terrific battle were coming from there, but when asked what it was all about, the Gunner said : “ That ain't no battle, that's the Battery burning its ammunition trucks.” (*Note:* This explains why 2nd Battalion stragglers making for Cluny Estate steered clear of an apparent “ dog-fight ” and why Winkfield found no one there.)

Colonel Harrison had another narrow escape from being over-run by a second group of tanks, but after a visit to the Cluny

“ battle ” he walked westwards along the road. He found Colonel Collins and Captain O’Neal still cheerfully tending the wounded at the A.D.S. opened by 36 Field Ambulance near M.S. 71½. The A.D.S. had been blitzed twice and many of the ambulances and trucks had been shot to bits or set on fire.

Harrison writes : “ As I was leaving, Fulton of 2/1st was brought in. He had been badly wounded and had a shattered thigh and a stomach wound. He was quite conscious and I stayed with him till the doctor had him under chloroform. Before that he had had morphia and his pain had eased off, but he had refused to be treated until he told me all he knew.”

It appeared that on his way back from Cluny Estate Fulton was riding pillion on a motor-cycle behind Havildar Manbahadur Gurung, when they ran into a Jap tank. Both of them had been severely wounded, and when the second blitz appeared Manbahadur had committed suicide rather than fall into Japanese hands. A British soldier had found Fulton by then and stayed with him through two successive blitzes, but fifteen tanks had passed before he could carry Fulton to the Field Ambulance. To quote Harrison again :

“ This gallant officer fell into Japanese hands and died of his wounds a month later in Taiping, on 8th February. He had done a fine job in keeping his battalion together after its disastrous knock at Asun.”

Harrison walked on along the road past the scene where the Battalion had been broken up, and found a number of our dead along the road, including one group of six bodies. He eventually found 28th Brigade H.Q. with 2/9th Gurkhas firmly in position north of the road, as were the 2/2nd west of the road. But there is no space here to tell how these two gallant Gurkha battalions held out all day, collected stragglers of many units, and at dusk closed towards the Slim River railway bridge. This had, unfortunately, been blown up the day before but was hastily repaired as a single-file foot-bridge. The Japanese closed in on the bridge-head and a fierce fight developed. Some parties tried to cross elsewhere and many of them were drowned; others were cut off or overrun. Both battalions lost about half their numbers, 2/2nd eventually saving about 400 and the 2/9th about 300. It was a tragic end to a heroic, hopeless day.

In the 12th Brigade the four battalions were reduced to the equivalent of about a company each.

As for the armoured blitz, it was at last halted by guns of 155

Field Regiment, caught moving forward, about three miles south of Slim bridge, near M.S. 79, or nineteen miles from its start.

Such was the extent of the Slim River disaster. The 11th Division had been dealt a crushing blow and had been reduced to the equivalent of a tired and weak brigade.

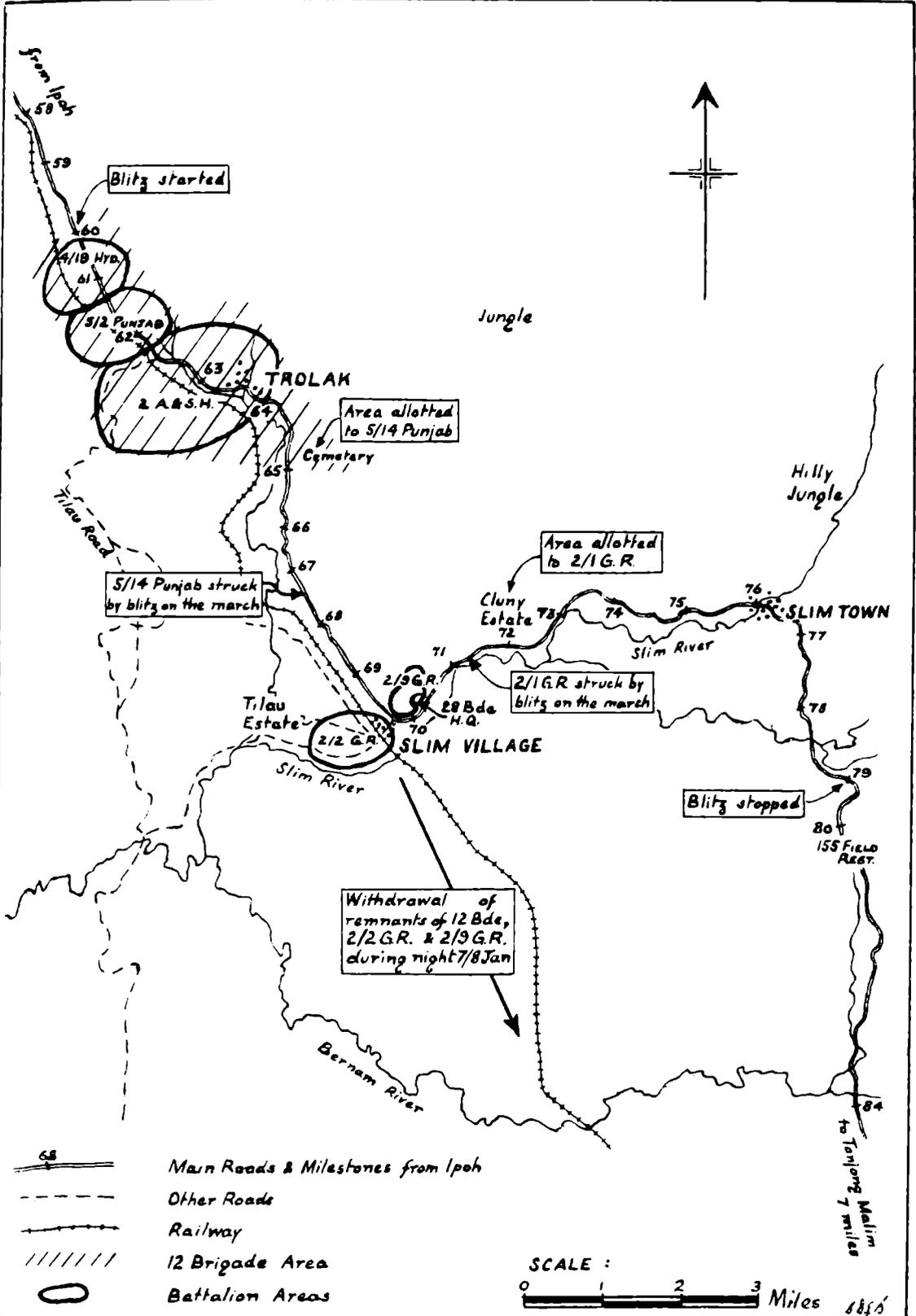
Of all its units the 2nd Battalion had come off worst, with 250 men missing. During the night 7th/8th January, Major W. J. Winkfield collected only Subedar Mahabir Rana, Jemadars Gajbahadur Gurung, Udbar Gurung, and Ramsaran Thapa, with twenty Gurkha other ranks, at Tanjong Malim, and Rasa, seventeen miles farther south. Captain J. W. Chapman, Lieutenant J. C. Pullen, Subedar Budhilal Gurung and some fifty G.O.Rs. of " B " Echelon had also moved to Rasa on the evening of 7th January.

The missing British officers were : Lieutenant-Colonel J. O. Fulton, who died as already described, and Captain W. G. Seaward, who died in the jungle in May, 1942; Captains C. G. Wylie and P. K. Dass, I.M.S. attached, who survived as prisoners; 2nd-Lieutenant J. C. Streatfeild, who started with a bad foot, tried to lie low near Slim, helped by a mess waiter, but died a few days after the action, having struggled almost to Tanjong Malim. Captain A. Masters and Lieutenant A. Williams, both with 28th Brigade H.Q., were captured and killed respectively, while on missions away from H.Q.

Lieutenant-Colonel Fulton's death, though not confirmed until much later, was a grievous loss to brother officers and men alike. He combined rare personal charm with an infectious gaiety; he inspired the complete confidence and devotion of everyone under him, and he proved himself a gallant leader of men, undaunted by repeated adversities.

The total numbers missing since the beginning of the campaign now amounted to some 600 Gurkha ranks—350 after Asun and 250 after Slim. Of those missing from Slim, nearly 100 managed to get away from the battlefield, but very few caught up with the rapidly retreating British forces, which were to be cooped up in Singapore Island within three weeks and to become prisoners sixteen days later. Some of the survivors' stories are told in Appendix 4, but here we must be content with a few outstanding exploits, typical of many others, in this tragic fight for freedom.

Captain Seaward, Jemadar Amarbahadur Thapa and ten men traversed a hundred miles of jungle till malaria or dysentery (or both) claimed the deaths of the two officers and three men at Titi,



SKETCH MAP 11
SLIM RIVER AREA
 7 JANUARY 1942

near Seremban, in May, 1942. The rest were finally captured in Johore, in the last stages of exhaustion and starvation, having existed mainly on tapioca roots for nine months.

S.M. Dalbahadur Gurung and Subedar Maniraj Thapa collected as many as fifty-six men in the jungles between Slim and Tanjong Malim. They covered 200 miles across country to reach Jementah (south-west of Segemat) about 2nd February—nearly a fortnight after our troops had left this area. By this time exhaustion and diseases had taken their toll, and only fifteen men remained with the two Gurkha officers. After the fall of Singapore they joined the M.P.A.J.A., or Malay People's Anti-Japanese Army—Chinese Communist guerillas, of whom we shall hear more later—and were used as instructors in weapons and tactics. The Subedar-Major and nine men were sent to another guerilla camp and the only inkling of their fate came in a vague rumour later that they had all been killed by the Japanese.

Subedar Maniraj continued to work with the guerillas until after VJ Day, three and a half years later, but lost four of his original six men before the end. They had many minor successes and also helped the Chinese to organize an ambush in which 200 Japanese were killed.

There were others who also joined guerilla bands, and among those who fell by the wayside on the trek to Johore some managed to survive, often on their own, until found by our troops after VJ Day. Perhaps the most astonishing story is that of Naik Nakam Gurung (told in Appendix 4), who lived a hermit's life in the jungle for more than seven years, unaware that the war had ended till rescued by a patrol of the 10th Gurkhas in October, 1949.

IV. WITHDRAWAL TO JOHORE

The retreat of the shattered remnants of the 12th and 28th Brigades from Slim River on 7th January was covered by hastily arranged demolitions and road-blocks held by guns of 155 Field Regiment and 2 Anti-Tank Battery. By midnight 7th/8th January, 2/16th Punjab arrived from Corps Reserve to hold a rear-guard position at Tanjong Malim, under cover of which survivors were rallied and re-formed in the Rasa area, seventeen miles to the south.

The 11th Division had still to stand and fight again with the task of keeping the enemy north of Kuala Lumpur till the night 10th/11th. The 28th Brigade, with 2/16th Punjab attached, was

also to be heavily engaged again and to fight an expensive rear-guard action near Serendah, twenty miles north of Kuala Lumpur, during 9th and 10th January.

But the little group of 2nd Battalion survivors took no active part in all this fighting, though it spent the 8th and 9th with H.Q., 28th Brigade. Before H.Q. moved from Rasa to Serendah on the night 8th/9th, Captain O'Neal rejoined with his ten men of the Gurkha Gang. He was sent off soon after midnight on a last desperate mission with his gangsters. On instructions from Brigadier Selby he set off with Lieutenant Doughty and the ten men, with the dual task of searching north up the railway for any remaining stragglers and of killing any Japanese encountered. He patrolled about five miles northwards, searching the railway and the road alongside it, but in vain. The weary party turned back at dawn, having been without food and sleep for thirty-six hours, during the last twelve of which it had covered thirty miles.

It returned to find Rasa deserted and pushed on to Serendah, where at last it caught up with Major Winkfield's party. At Rawang, a few miles farther south, next day the thirty-odd men of the 2nd Battalion were embodied as a platoon of "C" Company of their new "parent" unit, the 2/2nd G.R., with Captain O'Neal as Company Commander.

A week later, with the arrival of Lieutenant E. Palfery and seventy-one reinforcements, the 2/1st component of 2/2nd was formed into a complete company known as "'A' Company, 2/1st G.R." Although it remained part of the 2/2nd G.R. till the end of the campaign, it retained its separate identity throughout. The 2/1st, in fact, was not "dead," though it had been knocked out for nearly the full count on two occasions.

The Company was formed with a battalion-cum-company H.Q., three rifle platoons and one mortar platoon.

Meanwhile, the 28th Brigade, along with the rest of the battered 11th Division, was at last being withdrawn from the front into Johore. A new "Westforce," including the 9th Indian Division and 27th A.I.F. Brigade, was taking over a line roughly along the Muar River on the west coast to Segamat inland.

The whole 11th Division was to experience one last nightmare of traffic-congested roads on the night 13th/14th January as it moved up to its well-earned rest.

Colonel Harrison sums up: "For five long weeks alone and unrelieved, one Division, the 11th Indian Division, had fought and retreated—retreated and fought again. It had delayed the

advance of three Japanese divisions over 475 miles and, throughout those days and nights, the enemy had been supreme in the air, in full command of the sea, alone in their possession of tanks, and able constantly to replace their tired troops."

He adds : " The Division never had a chance in the face of the enemy's strategical advantages, numerical superiority, and material preponderance. But there is still this—if so much had not so often gone wrong so many more would have got back."

On the 15th January Brigadier (now Major-General) B. W. Key took over command of the 11th Division from Major-General Paris, who reverted to his old 12th Brigade in Singapore. General Key had already established a fine fighting record with his 8th Brigade on the east coast.

The 28th Brigade's destination was the extreme southern tip of the Malaya peninsula, westwards of Singapore Island. It reached this area in a series of " long hops," between 11th and 15th January, through Kuala Lumpur, Tampin, Chaah and Ayer Hitam. Based on Pontian Kechil, its role was the defence of this sector of the coast against the very lively threat of further Japanese sea-borne landings. It was directly under Corps control and in touch with a mixed group near Batu Pahat, forty miles north-west up the coast.

The 28th Brigade sector extended from Kukup, in the southern promontory, to Benut, half-way to Bahu Pahat. Roads had to be constantly patrolled and beach defences prepared and manned. After a few days for rest and reorganization, from the 15th to the 18th, " 'A' Company, 2/1st G.R.," under Lieutenant Palfery, took over the beach defences near Pontian Besar. It spent the next ten days digging hard and patrolling in this quiet backwater from the fierce battles raging along the Muar River, and around Batu Pahat and inland. During this period our forces were being relentlessly pushed back on all fronts towards Singapore.

At this time the 2/1st Company had a front-line strength of 146 G.O.Rs., with 57 in " B " Echelon and another 50 elsewhere (sick or reinforcements), making a total of 253 G.O.Rs.

Officers on the strength were :

Major W. J. Winkfield, 2nd-in-Command, 2/2nd G.R.

Captain N. P. G. O'Neal.

Captain J. W. Chapman (" B " Echelon).

Lieutenant J. C. Pullen (" B " Echelon).

Lieutenant E. Palfery, O.C. " A " Company, 2/1st.

Lieutenant E. W. Pennell, attached 28th Brigade H.Q.

Subedar Budhihal Gurung (" B " Echelon).
Subedar Jitbahadur Gurung (Reinforcement Camp).
Subedar Mahabir Rana.
Subedar Indrabahadur Thapa (Hospital).
Jemadar Udbar Gurung.
Jemadar Gajbahadur Gurung (Hospital).
Jemadar Bagbir Gurung.
Jemadar Ramsaran Thapa.

On 22nd January Major Winkfield took over the command of the 2/1st Company and Captain O'Neal was transferred to 2/9th G.R. as a company commander.

During this seaside interlude several small parties of stragglers from the north reached the 2/2nd G.R. front by both land and sea. One was unlucky to suffer some fatal casualties when landing near a beach post and failing to answer a repeated challenge. During the morning of 29th January the right, or northern, forward company of 2/2nd G.R. became engaged by Japanese advancing down the coast road near Pontian Besar, and Lieutenant F. H. Lovett was killed while leading a fighting patrol.

Meanwhile, orders had been received for the final withdrawal to Singapore Island, and the 28th Brigade disengaged that afternoon. The 2/2nd and 2/9th Gurkhas harboured that night near M.S. 27. (*Note:* Milestones here are measured from the north end of the Singapore Causeway at Johore Bahru, Pontian Kechili being at M.S. 40.) A platoon of 2/2nd G.R. and a company of 5/14th Punjab fought a brisk action near the G. Pulai reservoir that evening and successfully frustrated the enemy's attempt to cut in behind the Brigade.

During the night 30th/31st January 28th Brigade, with the rest of 11th Division, withdrew without incident across the Causeway into Singapore Island. The various moves had been carefully co-ordinated and there was an unusual and welcome absence of any traffic congestion.

" ' A ' Company 2/1st G.R." drove across the 1,100-yard Causeway shortly before midnight, turning east into the Naval Base area. The last British troops were across by 0730 hours on 31st January. The lock gates at the northern end were destroyed and a 75-foot gap was blown in the main Causeway. The southern end of the gap was then blocked by a wire entanglement covering 200 yards and also sown with mines and booby traps.

The Battle of Malaya was over.

The Battle for Singapore Island had begun.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE DEFENCE OF SINGAPORE

(Map 12, facing page 140)

I. "THE FORTRESS": EARLY IMPRESSIONS

ONE of the first things the troops realized, as they looked round in their early days on Singapore Island, was that the much vaunted "fortress" was in fact no fortress at all. No doubt there were strong coastal defences in the south, but in the north the coast was like any other tropical island, with muddy creeks and mangrove swamps, but no defences whatever. The Naval Base was certainly impressive with its elaborate installations of all kinds, but there were no fortifications here either.

This Base had become something in the nature of a legend. Its defence had formed the primary object of the whole campaign, and now the 11th Division found itself responsible for its close tactical defence. Surely, here was something worth defending, a fillip for morale, an inspiration to stand and fight with backs to the wall. Surely, now it would be a last-man and last-round defence. How often had these words been used—and abused—and not for the last time!

There were no ships, of course, and all the marvellous machines, the vast tunnels full of shells and mines, the miracles of naval ordnance, all these were museum pieces for all the good they were now.

The 28th Brigade found itself responsible for the six thousand yards of sea-front between the Dockyard, at the east end of the Naval Base, and the Causeway, both exclusive. At the outset, one company of 5/14th Punjabis held the small bay west of the Dockyard, and the 2/2nd Gurkhas, with the M.G. Company of the Manchesters under its orders, covered the rest of the front. The 2/2nd Gurkhas' left flank linked up with the right flank of the 2/30th Battalion of the 27th Australian Brigade (8th Australian Division) four hundred yards east of the Causeway.

The rest of 5/14th were in Brigade Reserve south of the Dockyard, while the 2/9th Gurkhas were at Sembawang Aerodrome, three miles south of the Dockyard (from 1st February).

Eastwards of the Dockyard lay the 53rd Brigade, part of the newly arrived 18th British Division, with which 2/2nd were to be closely concerned at the end.

Such, then, was the scene in which the small " ' A ' Company, 2/1st G.R.," was to play its part.

II. EIGHT DAYS OF WAITING AND WATCHING :

31ST JANUARY TO 7TH FEBRUARY

Winkfield's company spent the first day in the 2/2nd Battalion Reserve position, digging hard and watching with almost casual indifference (after past experiences) some high-level bombing of the Base close by. Then came a week on the sea-front in the western or " armament section " of the Base, with a 2nd Gurkha company on its left nearer the Causeway. Here, in the maze of concrete buildings, quays and underground magazines, it was impossible to dig, and all-round defensive posts had to be built in the form of sandbag breastworks.

All the Brigade units were as busy as beavers. There was a vast amount of work to be done : forward and support lines to build and both defensive and tactical wire to be erected, as well as under-water obstacles. By night the waterfront had to be constantly patrolled. As Japanese artillery became more active, movement by day became more and more restricted. M.T. could be clearly heard across the narrow straits by either side at night and became mutually harassed by shell-fire. " B " Echelon therefore came forward to share the lot of the forward troops.

From 5th February a mass of Japanese artillery came into action, concentrating almost entirely on the Naval Base and the 27th Australian Brigade area to the west. Gun positions and O.Ps. were specially picked out. According to Japanese accounts " this was the heaviest concentration of fire ever put down by the Japanese Army. The guns used were of all calibres but the main punch came from modern 240-mm. howitzers, which had been specially built for the purpose. For three days the artillery duel went on and all the while Japanese bombers droned overhead in successive waves, unopposed by any enemy aeroplanes, with little if any anti-aircraft fire to bother them."

The British artillery replied vigorously and the Japanese

admitted later that the effects were "very severe." "We failed to silence the enemy's batteries," they added.

On 6th February three of the enemy's shells landed in quick succession inside the entrance of an underground magazine occupied by a platoon of the 2/1st Company, killing ten men and wounding thirteen. No. 6758 Lance-Naik Chheosing Gurung gallantly dashed in while the shell-fire was at its height and made four trips with a wounded man on his back, being himself wounded on the fourth trip. A fire was raging inside and shells exploding all round, but Chheosing insisted on going back a fifth time with a few others, all in gas-masks, to put out the fire. It was very largely due to him that the whole magazine did not explode and cause even heavier casualties. He was awarded a Military Medal in a *Gazette* published in 1945.

On 7th February a large draft of reinforcements from the Regimental Centre, Dharmasala, arrived in Singapore. It consisted of Captain P. R. Ommanney, 2nd-Lieutenants L. J. Smith and N. de V. White, three Gurkha officers, and 200 Gurkha other ranks. The numbers were made up by sixty each from the 3rd and 4th Battalions and eighty from the Centre. Captain Ommanney, 2nd-Lieutenant Smith, two G.Os. and 130 G.O.Rs. were immediately posted to 2/9th G.R. and formed into "D" Company of that Battalion. The rest of the draft remained at the Reinforcement Camp till the end.

It seems that at this fateful stage of the campaign it was not considered worth while to build up 2/1st again. 2/2nd G.R. could already muster four rifle companies, with 2/1st "A" Company, whereas 2/9th could only raise two before the reinforcements arrived. Perhaps the remaining one G.O. and sixty-seven men were found too useful in the Reinforcement Camp and were retained for local defence and other duties. Had the campaign continued longer the 2/1st might again have emerged as a battalion with 450 of its own men on Singapore Island.

On the night 7th/8th February the 2/1st Company moved to a reserve position (Area III) at Naval Command H.Q. behind the left front of 2/2nd Gurkhas. All this time neither the 28th nor the 53rd Brigade had been content to sit quiet on the south shore waiting for the Japanese. Every night up to the 8th officers of both brigades had crossed to the Johore shore in dinghies, to explore the creeks and foreshores. Among these were Lieutenant Doughty, who had been with 2/1st and the Gurkha Gang, and Lieutenant Henderson, both now with 2/2nd. These and other officers found

no signs of infantry or landing craft throughout but reported much movement of enemy M.T. from east to west on the inland road during the night 8th/9th February. They were also considerably "embarrassed" by our own artillery fire !

III. FOUR CRITICAL DAYS : 8TH TO 11TH FEBRUARY

From noon on 8th February the enemy's bombardment reached a crescendo of violence, but it was mainly directed on the front and rear of the 27th Australian Brigade to the west. Part of the 2nd Gurkhas' front, particularly "D" Company's near the Causeway, and the 11th Divisional Artillery O.P. on Bt. Mundai, however, continued to get their share. This was clearly the final preparation for an infantry assault, due at any moment on some part of the 11th Division's or the Australians' sectors—but where ?

Japanese accounts state : "Observers who watched the final phase of the preparatory bombardment say that the land across the straits was a solid mass of smoke and fire. It looked as if nothing could live under that rain of shells."

By 1930 hours the enemy's shelling reached its highest pitch, almost entirely on the 8th Australian Division's area. About 2200 hours, 11th Divisional O.Ps. reported red and blue lights on the front of 22nd Australian Brigade (left or south-west of 27th). They took these to be S O S signals, but it seems that the Japanese were using these lights as success signals for the first wave of assault.

Again the Japanese account paints a graphic picture :

"By 8th February our launches, including many armoured landing craft, and hundreds of heavy guns, had been collected. At Zero Hour the engines began to beat softly and fifteen minutes after midnight (2200 hours British local time) the red and blue signal rockets went up, indicating that the first group was over. The Matsui (5th Division) and Mudaguchi (18th Division) Units had been given the Tengah aerodrome as their mutual objective."

Later, the account continues :

"The Japanese losses were unexpectedly heavy—the final outcome, however, was never in doubt, for there simply were not enough British guns to cover the divisional fronts on which the Japanese were attacking (5th east, 18th west)."

The whole force of the assault fell on the 22nd Australian Brigade holding a front of 16,000 yards, mostly marsh and swamp. In short, the forward areas were practically all overrun in a few hours and the survivors fell back to battalion perimeters in rear,

contrary, as the Despatch says, to Command H.Q. policy. This had laid down that "the enemy must be stopped near the beaches," but as will be seen, this order quickly became a dead letter.

The first news of actual Japanese landings came to the Naval Base garrison early on the 9th, but by dusk the Japanese were said to have reached Tengah aerodrome, which was infiltration with a vengeance.

The 27th Australian Brigade, on the immediate left of the 2nd Gurkhas, had not been directly attacked on the 9th, though its flank was "in the air." At 0430 hours on the 10th the Gurkha officer in command of the left platoon of the 2nd Gurkhas ("D" Company) was given a scrap of paper by two Australians. On it was scribbled: "position on Mandai Road near Bt. Mandai and 195 feature near 13 M.S." (The latter was three miles south of the southern end of the Causeway.) As soon as Captain R. D. H. Bucknall, the Company Commander, saw this note, he sent off a patrol into the 2/30th Australian Battalion's area—to find it empty. This was the first intimation of a general withdrawal on the west, and came as a most unpleasant surprise to all in the 11th Division. What about a last desperate fight on the beaches?

The 8th Australian Division, when rung up, said it would be impossible to reoccupy the forward positions with the few troops available. "It was thought, however, that the 27th Australian Brigade would halt and hold the Mandai Road village near M.S. 13." That was all the comfort that could be obtained.

Meanwhile "D" Company of 2nd Gurkhas was engaged in desperate efforts to plug the gap on the western flank. Both Captain R. D. H. Bucknall and his Company Officer, Captain Coombe, were killed in fierce patrol clashes with Japanese near the Causeway.

Major Winkfield's 2/1st G.R. Company had to form front to the west flank, but the Battalion front was not attacked. During the day some Japanese parties worked round the rear and Colonel Woolcombe used two keen and dashing volunteer parties of 9th Northumberland Fusiliers and 5th Searchlight Battalion, which had been placed at his disposal, to eject these infiltrators.

The Battalion took no part, however, in the fierce fighting which went on during the 10th and 11th south of the Causeway. The Australians' withdrawal to a position east of Mandai village left open the main road from the Causeway to Singapore City. It also threatened to uncover the lateral Mandai Road running west to east, from Mandai to Nee Soon, only two miles behind the

Base. The 8th Indian Brigade and other units became fiercely engaged in clearing the Hankow and Sembawang Estates, but could neither dislodge the enemy from the Marsiling Estate nor close the gap farther south towards Mandai village.

The Japanese steadily built up their strength in this area by a regular ferry service west of the Causeway, which they continued to operate despite constant shelling and the loss of many boats. The straits were, unfortunately, defiladed from the 2nd Gurkhas' positions by the height of the Causeway itself.

Early on the 11th it was found that the Australians were beginning to thin out southward from Mandai, so General Key hastily moved the 8th Brigade to cover the Mandai Road west of Nee Soon. As the situation got worse south of the Causeway, General Key proposed to hold a "last-man" Divisional perimeter in the north, to include Nee Soon. He was warned, however, by the Corps Commander that a general withdrawal was likely towards Singapore with which the 11th Division must conform.

Senior officers in the Division heard with amazement on the morning of the 11th that General Yamashita, the Japanese Commander, had demanded immediate capitulation in a message dropped by air. They did not realize the full extent of the rot which had set in elsewhere, and the regimental officers and men knew less. They were all prepared—more, they were determined—to stand and fight where they were. Warning orders, to be prepared to evacuate the Base, came as a bomb-shell to all of them.

The great counter-offensive in the west, planned for dawn on the 11th, had in fact hung fire at first and then fizzled out except for a lone and gallant effort by Lieutenant-Colonel A. E. Cumming, V.C., and his Jat Battalion. There were few other starters.

(*Note:* Colonel Cumming's Battalion reached its objective on a wooded hill about eight miles north-west of Singapore early on the 11th and remained, isolated but unspotted by the enemy, until the day after the surrender. Colonel Cumming and a party of V.C.Os. then succeeded in making good their escape, first to Sumatra and then to India.)

To cut a long and dismal story short the 11th Division was ordered to withdraw from the Base during the night 11th/12th to a line running roughly north from Nee Soon to Simpang village and creek, in order to protect the left flank of the 18th British Division. Reluctantly the troops pulled out from the Base and plodded east, then south.

The 28th Brigade came into Divisional Reserve north of Nee

Soon, with 2/2nd immediately north of the village. The Battalion had been considerably sniped and mortared during the afternoon, but the move from the Base area was not molested. Troops of the 8th Brigade moving eastwards along the Mandai Road had, however, to fight their way back to their new positions on the west of Nee Soon.

A Special Order of the Day by General Wavell, Supreme Commander, South-west Pacific Command, who had paid a flying visit to the Island, was read out to the troops on the evening of the 11th. It urged troops to fight it out to the end in close contact with the enemy. It urged commanders and senior officers to lead their men and if necessary die with them. This only echoed the thoughts of everyone in the 11th Division, but defeatism had set in elsewhere and the front was crumbling. At the end of the Order General Key added: "General Sir Archibald Wavell, during his visit to the Division yesterday, expressed himself well pleased with the conduct of the 11th Indian Division since its arrival on Singapore Island."

Early on the 12th orders came for the Division to withdraw to a position east of Singapore, starting at noon.

We cannot attempt here to follow the detailed moves of the various troops from around Nee Soon to the outskirts of Singapore City, where the front gradually contracted to a semicircular perimeter barely four miles in radius. In this confined space were crowded some 80,000 troops, in mixed formations and units, and up to half a million civilians. The scene can scarcely be imagined, much less described.

IV. THE LAST FOUR DAYS

We are much indebted to Lieutenant-Colonel L. N. Evans, M.B.E. (then Major), of 2nd Gurkhas for a graphic account of the fortunes of his battalion, including our small band of 2/1st, during the last four days, from the 12th to the 15th February. His account, from which we have borrowed freely, paints a vivid picture of the closing scenes from a regimental officer's viewpoint. Portions in brackets have been added to explain locations or events elsewhere. It should be noted that Major D. B. C. Robertson had taken over command of 2/2nd on the 11th when Lieutenant-Colonel G. H. D. Woolcombe had gone sick, to rest at Brigade H.Q.

Extracts from Major Evans's Story of the Last Four Days :

12th February

“ The Battalion moved off at midnight and arrived in the harbour north of Nee Soon two hours later (12th), so the majority were able to get a few hours' sleep. After, it was thought, everyone had fed it was found that ‘ “A” Company, 2/1st G.R., ’ had had nothing. This unfortunate mistake occurred owing to a shortage of cooking pots, due to our hurried move from the Base, which compelled cooking to be done on a central instead of a company basis. However, the Q.M. soon discovered the remains of a supply dump near the road, where a R.I.A.S.C. officer was issuing to all comers everything he had been unable to backload. Very soon the men of ‘ A ’ Company were each breakfasting off one packet of Australian biscuits, one tin of sardines, one tin of apricots, one tin of condensed milk and a large slab of Naval chocolate, so they were definitely up on the rest of the Battalion.

“ The morning of the 12th passed uneventfully apart from shelling and some small-arms fire from the north and north-east. About noon Major Robertson received verbal orders from the Brigade Commander for the anticipated move back into the Singapore defence ring. He was to move to a harbour near M.S. 5 on Thompson Road (near the eastern end of the MacRitchie Reservoir) prior to taking up a position to be decided later. Information about the enemy's penetration from the west in rear of us was hazy, but we were told that opposition was likely, in which case the move was to be pressed vigorously.

“ The Battalion moved off at 1400, trying to keep clear of the road, but progress became very slow and frequent defiles forced it on to the road. The congestion all along the road towards Singapore resembled that near Epsom on the evening of Derby day. After going about three miles it was hardly possible to leave the road at all owing to defiles and rough going off the road.

“ The men presented a strange and somewhat sorry sight, all dead tired and many almost asleep as they walked. They were dirty, unshaven and wearing almost every variety of head-dress and foot-wear : a few, not many, in steel helmets, others in felt hats, forage caps or comforters. There was a mixture of boots and P.T. shoes, some even in socks or bare feet. These articles were all that remained to them after the many vicissitudes of the long retreat and numerous rapid withdrawals. This, however, was the last lap in a retreat of some 450 miles in ten weeks. The contrast between ourselves and the almost spick-and-span appearance of

the newly arrived 18th British Division troops, whom we passed on the road, was most noticeable. The appearance of 'Johnny Gurkha,' however, always evoked greetings and smiles, which many of the men were still capable of returning.

"With the road packed as it was, in broad daylight, it will always remain a mystery why we were not subjected to air attack, but we were spared both that and ground opposition.

"The Battalion reached M.S. 5 about 1700 but was told to move on to a so-called rest area about three miles farther on and, in making a detour to avoid a burning ammunition lorry, got on to the wrong road. This was soon forcibly brought home to it when the head of the Battalion was shelled at close range by an unidentified but fortunately small-calibre gun. Shells landed in the road a matter of yards ahead of the C.O. and Adjutant, who were moving with 'C' Company H.Q. The mistake was very quickly rectified and no casualties were suffered.

"It was getting dark, and after further delays, trying to find its way, the Battalion arrived at its 'rest area' at 2030 hours. This seemed to consist of a number of temporary huts, originally put up for refugees, in an open space near the Wireless D.F. Station. The area was completely encircled by gun positions. By this time, of course, the whole of the force, including the 11th and 18th Divisions, two Australian Brigades, 44th Brigade and various Fortress Troops, etc., were situated inside a semicircular area with a radius of four miles or less around the City.

"There were virtually no 'back areas' in the normal meaning of the term. It was not surprising, therefore, that guns of all kinds were thick on the ground everywhere. A troop of guns by the roadside chose to fire five rounds gun-fire as the men moved in, nearly blowing the heads off those in front. Food and water had been drawn and companies were just moving off to their areas when heavy enemy counter-battery fire came down. It was heavy stuff, estimated to be 5.9's, and it fell among the tails of the dispersed companies, who scattered in all directions. Company Commanders had some trouble in collecting their companies in the dark.

"Fortunately the casualties were few, but it was lucky the Battalion was not caught a few minutes earlier. An ammunition lorry and car were set on fire and an unfortunate detached platoon of 2/9th G.R. was almost wiped out. The M.O. and Major Evans dealt with the casualties and evacuated them in such vehicles as they could find."

13th February

“ The remainder of the night 12th/13th passed quietly and daylight enabled Company Commanders to collect their scattered men. Lieutenant-Colonel Woolcombe was still resting at Brigade H.Q., unable to resume command, and did not in fact subsequently do so. [The rest of the 11th Division had meanwhile withdrawn overnight and taken up a position on the right of the 18th Division, astride the Serangoon Road south of Payar Lebar, in touch with the eastern defences near Payar Lebar airfield. The 28th Brigade was in rear in the “ rest area ” between Payar Lebar and the City.]

“ In view of the death-trap nature of their area, 28th Brigade were moved about a mile to the north-west. Only 2/2nd G.R. and 2/9th G.R. remained in the Brigade now, since 5/14th Punjabis had gone to the 8th Brigade on the Payar Lebar front.

“ The new position was much more suitable. It was on a small feature with reasonably good cover from the air, in rubber and scrub, but contained some native huts still occupied by Chinese. [This area was about 1,200 yards south of the 53rd Brigade front along Braddell Road which runs from the MacRitchie Reservoir eastwards to Woodleigh.]

“ The day passed uneventfully, companies digging and camouflaging as best they could with tools available, more being borrowed from the local Chinese. The latter's plight was pathetic; when advised to evacuate the area they simply said there was nowhere else to go.

“ At 2200 hours an order was telephoned from Brigade H.Q. for twenty picked men, including four G.Os. and fifty per cent of N.C.O.s and G.O.Rs., to report urgently at Brigade H.Q. in half an hour. The task was ‘ most secret ’ and could not be given over the phone, but the time limit was stressed. Some thought had to be given to selection, orders issued to companies, and the party sent to Brigade H.Q. half a mile away, all within half an hour. It was presumed, wrongly as it turned out later, that it was a murder gang of some sort and real tough eggs were required. Only ‘ C ’ Company's men were late, by five minutes, but they were returned.

“ Some indication of their role was obtained next morning (though not officially divulged until after the capitulation) when Lieutenant C. R. Skene returned from an attachment to Brigade H.Q. He believed the party, which was joined by a similar one from 2/9th and included Colonel Woolcombe and Captain Young

of 2/9th, was for evacuation. This later proved to be correct: an attempt to save something from the approaching disaster. The Divisional party was expected to leave by ship that night but arrived at the docks too late, the ship having had to pull out earlier owing to shell-fire. The party spent the night and the next day in the Y.M.C.A. building, with the idea of getting away the following night. Unfortunately, shortly before they left next evening the house was bombed and many casualties suffered."

(The survivors were told to make for Sumatra in any craft they could find, but the docks had already been "combed" and few seaworthy boats remained, so few got away at all.

Colonel Woolcombe got away, but his ship was sunk and he was either killed or drowned. Captain Young got back safely to India and was later to organize the Gurkha rescue element of Force 136.

The escape party from 2/1st consisted of Subedar Jitbahadur Gurung, C.H.M. Manbahadur Gurung, who won an I.O.M. at Asun, and one rifleman. Both the last two were killed in the Y.M.C.A. building, but Subedar Jitbahadur survived as a prisoner.

Major E. T. D. Ryder of 1st G.R., who was G.S.O.2 of 11th Division, also got away in a boat which was unfortunately sunk with no survivors.)

14th February

"Companies continued to improve their cover and concealment, and none of the widespread air bombing fell in the Battalion area. The men were in very good heart after a little rest and were delighted when an enemy plane was brought down by A.A. fire close by. It was almost pathetic how this small success encouraged them.

"At 1100 hours the Battalion was placed under the command of 53rd Brigade under Brigadier C. L. B. Duke, an old friend of the Regiment (2nd Gurkhas), in Dehra Dun. It was ordered to fill a gap in the front line from the junction of Thompson and Braddell Roads (east of the MacRitchie Reservoir) to a Chinese cemetery a mile eastward. Information was scanty. 5th Norfolks were to occupy the cemetery, on our right, and a mixed force was believed to hold the road junction and Hill 80 close by, on the left. (A vague objective was given in the direction of the road junction called 'ring contour,' of which there were several.)

"The route was across country broken by many small features and rubber groves. No guide was provided and at this time there was only one map in the Battalion. The country was impassable

for M.T., so everything, including entrenching tools, ammunition and water, had to be carried. The situation was obscure, but enemy penetration probable owing to the gap in the front.

“The Battalion moved off about 1400 with ‘D’ Company (Captain P. Kemmis-Betty) and advanced Battalion H.Q. leading. Then came main H.Q., ‘C’ Company (Lieutenant D. R. Henderson), ‘A’ Company, 2/1st G.R. (Major W. J. Winkfield) and ‘B’ Company (Captain J. Magee), at intervals of 100 yards. Control was difficult owing to the lack of maps and guides, or any definable axis of advance. Companies were leap-frogged and personally directed by the C.O. on to each feature in turn. ‘C’ Company, less a platoon on patrol, when leap-frogging through ‘D’ overshot their objective and disappeared.

“Despite widespread patrolling that evening and early the following morning ‘C’ Company was not found again until late on the 15th.

“Meanwhile, the Battalion reached its presumed objective at Ring Contour towards dusk. There was some dispute when the Brigadier arrived as to which was the right ring contour, but eventually it was decided that the Battalion should stay where it was. No food was received that night.”

(The position where it halted appears to have been about half a mile south-east of the road junction—Thompson and Braddell roads—on the right flank and slightly in rear of the gap.)

The Last Day, 15th February

“At first light aircraft became very active, planes flying very low over the position. Later the Brigade Commander arrived and, owing to a further threat on the right of the 53rd Brigade front, about a mile and a half north-east, he ordered the Battalion to stand by for an alternative task of moving to this new front instead of the north-west gap.

“The enemy were now bombing Singapore City heavily and artillery on both sides was very active, firing being almost continuous. At about 1130 the indefatigable Q.M. managed to reach us with much needed cooked rations. He had been shelled most of the way and his arrival proved a mixed blessing.

“Evidently his lorry had been spotted disappearing into our covered position, as very shortly accurate mortar fire came down for about fifteen minutes. The Battalion by this time was well dug in, however, and no casualties occurred.

“A little later low-flying planes were over the area and were

engaged by small-arms fire. Almost immediately 'D' Company on the west face of our position opened heavy automatic and rifle fire at a ground target and 'crackers' went off to the east. These crackers had often been used by the enemy and were believed to be dropped from the air. They resembled bursts of rifle fire and were liable to give the impression of being surrounded.

"The C.O. went to 'D' Company, and although no enemy could be seen, light automatic fire was coming over the position (possibly from local fifth columnists). A curious phenomenon seen on several occasions during these last few days was a silent stream of red lights, similar to red tracer, shooting into the air from within our positions. Presumably they were fired by fifth columnists as an indication to enemy air or artillery. The fire on 'D' Company's front died down a few minutes later.

"The C.O. sent Major Evans off at noon to try and contact the unit on the left of the gap and to post a group on our real ring-contour objective. At 1345 hours orders were received to carry out our original role and fill the gap.

"'D' Company moved at 1400 and occupied Ring Contour, followed by advance Battalion H.Q. and 'A' Company, 2/1st G.R., which was to pass through 'D' on to Hill 75 beyond. At the same time 'B,' with part of 'C,' was to join up the front, between 'A' and the 5th Norfolks on the right."

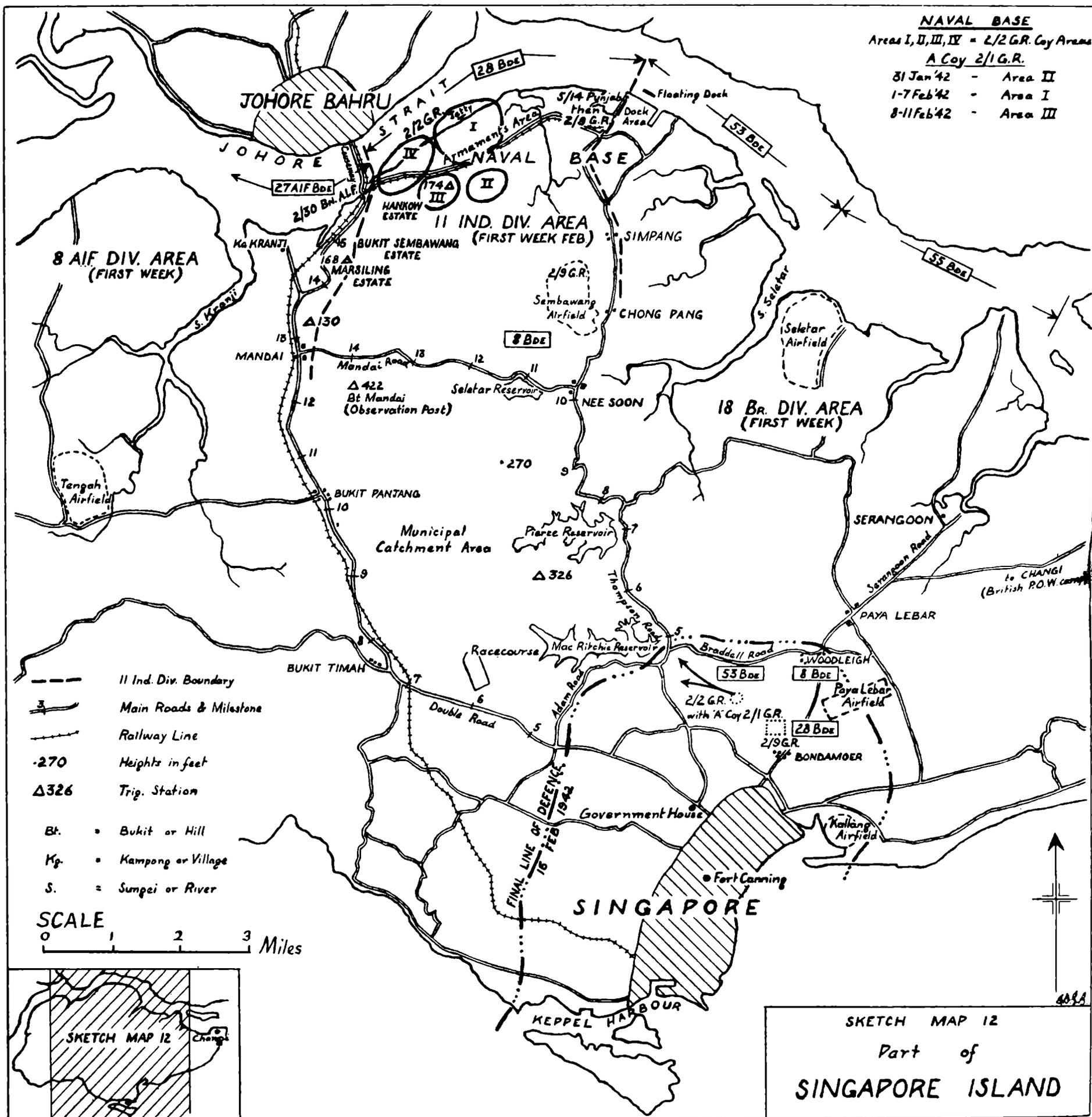
(These moves were unopposed, and the rest of "C" Company, lost the night before, was found in position with other troops near the road junction.)

THE SURRENDER

"As Major Evans was about to leave the original position with main Battalion H.Q., to follow 'A' Company, a motor-cycle D.R. arrived. He had a message from 53rd Brigade H.Q., which read as follows :

"'An emissary proceeded to Japanese H.Q. at 1130 hours. At 1600 hours all troops will cease fire but remain in present positions. If attacked by the enemy after 1600 hours the officer or N.C.O. of the party concerned will raise the white flag. There will be no destruction of arms or equipment but secret papers, codes and ciphers will be destroyed. Water and rations must be conserved. All money will be burnt.'"

(Note: No notice was taken in 11th Division of the "no destruction of arms" clause; all guns, wireless sets, etc., were at once rendered useless. Before the cease-fire General Wavell



wirelessly his personal order for all guns, weapons, etc., to be destroyed.)

“Major Evans could hardly believe his eyes. Surrender !

“This had never been contemplated and seemed too appalling a prospect. He began to doubt the authenticity of the message and suspected fifth-column work. However, there were two signallers of 43rd Brigade Signal Section with him who were able to identify the D.R. and recognize the signature of the Brigade Major.

“Evans at once sent off Lieutenant D. A. Jenkins to inform the Commanding Officer and endeavoured to get in touch with Brigade H.Q. by phone for further confirmation. By this time, however, the phone had been disconnected and the cable was being laid forward to the new Battalion H.Q. He therefore moved to the new H.Q. to await the Commanding Officer. When the cable party arrived the phone was connected but the line was cut by shell-fire.

“Meanwhile the Commanding Officer had contacted the company on the left of the gap, and had just begun to reconnoitre the Battalion position when Lieutenant D. A. Jenkins arrived with the fatal news. It was then 1545 and the cease-fire had been ordered for 1600 hours.

“The Commanding Officer returned at once to his H.Q. and informed all Company Commanders, ordering them to close their men in the area of Company H.Qs. The Subedar-Major (Kalusing Chhetri) was also informed. His reaction was pitiful; like all the British officers he simply could not understand it and was completely shattered.

“Instead of the expected cessation of fire at 1600 hours artillery on both sides continued to be as active as ever, and not long afterwards a burst of shell-fire came down not far from Battalion H.Q. This was more bewildering than ever. It transpired afterwards that there was some confusion as to the time of the cease-fire, and many units, after receiving the order, were told to fight on as at the beginning of hostilities. The Battalion, however, did not receive this order. Firing did not cease entirely until 2100 hours.”

AFTER THE CEASE-FIRE : 15TH FEBRUARY

“No previous thought having been devoted to such a situation as this, the Commanding Officer was in some doubt as to the correct procedure. In any case, whatever was done, the reaction

of this particular enemy to a white flag, in response to his attack, was not viewed with any confidence.

“ At about 1700 hours the Commanding Officer issued orders for all arms and ammunition to be collected in a central dump and for companies to close in to areas nearer Battalion H.Q., while sentries were posted to watch for the approach of the enemy. Arrangements were made for raising white flags at Battalion and Company H.Qs. on the enemy's arrival. Later the Commanding Officer addressed all Gurkha officers and explained the situation as best he could. They were very depressed indeed and some of them unexpectedly emotional. The Subedar-Major was almost in tears at the disgrace of our surrender. The British officers' feelings can best be imagined.

“ No food for officers or men reached the Battalion that night, but a brisk trade was done with the local Chinese in chickens, which the men soon roasted and devoured. The Chinese were very depressed at the development of events but were most kind to us. They invited officers and men into their houses and treated them as honoured guests. Whole families busied themselves in producing relays of cooked rice. No question of payment was even mentioned, but naturally they received it. Their friendliness, sympathy, and very practical help were greatly appreciated in our dejection and humiliation.

“ By dark there were still no signs of our victors and no further word had been received from our own people as to what we were to do, so all lay down to a much needed night's rest in the strange and unfamiliar silence. Many men had averaged not more than two hours' sleep in twenty-four during the last seven days and nights, snatched in periods varying between half an hour and three hours. All were, therefore, too tired to speculate on what the future held in store for them, nor did they realize the full calamities yet to come.

“ Some of the Volunteer officers attached to the Battalion left that evening in an attempt to get away. With one exception they did not get far and soon joined the British officers of the Regiment in captivity.”

Here ends Major Evans's record.

The ten weeks of desperate struggles and retreats were over. At the end the 11th Division's front was firm and intact. So was that of 53rd Brigade, where the 2/2nd Gurkhas were actually

advancing and "A" Company, 2/1st G.R., were consolidating a new position when the end came.

There had been no withdrawal from the Naval Base or later positions until specifically ordered from above, to conform with the retreat elsewhere. To the officers and men alike the shame of having to lay down their arms in these circumstances seemed all the more unbearable.

In retrospect the enemy's overwhelming naval, air and armoured superiority gave the Army no real chance in the battles for Malaya and Singapore. The land forces, left to themselves, were both in numbers and matériel fatally inferior to the Japanese. The heroic, hopeless battles of the retreat must be viewed in this perspective.

Two years later we shall see other Battalions of the Regiment battling fiercely in defence, then surging forward to victory when the balance of men and matériel had swung to our side. Let us not forget the crippling handicaps suffered by the 2nd Battalion in the disastrous retreat to Singapore.

AFTER THE SURRENDER

During 16th February orders were received from the Japanese for G.Os. and G.O.Rs. to march to Farrer Park (just north of Government House) and for British officers to make their way to Changi, in the eastern corner of the Island, next day.

So began three and a half years of captivity for 9 British officers, 20 Gurkha officers and just over 1,000 Gurkha other ranks of the 2nd Battalion. The Gurkha ranks comprised, roughly, 350 taken at Asun, 250 after Slim, and 450 in Singapore (including the February draft of 200).

In the final tally after the war 182 Gurkha officers and other ranks were found to be missing, of whom about 70 were believed to be battle casualties, and the rest to have died in the jungle or in captivity. Sixty-eight had been wounded in action, some of whom died, but most of them became prisoners later.

CHAPTER NINE

THE YEARS OF CAPTIVITY

GENERAL CONDITIONS

WE cannot attempt to follow in detail the misfortunes of the thousand and more officers and men of the 2nd Battalion who had to suffer the unbounded arrogance and brutality of the Japanese for three and a half years—until the Rising Sun had set. It is a grim story of hardship and hunger, but it is also an epic of splendid endurance and heroism. Only the barest outline of the prisoners' ordeals and a few authentic episodes can be given here. Most of the men were only too glad to forget their experiences, and even the Gurkha officers, who with reader pens might well have compiled a documentary "best seller," preferred to confine their stories to a few hard facts.

Prisoner-of-war life under Japanese domination has been fully described in books by British prisoners, among which may be mentioned *Gods without Reason*, by Dan Blackater, and *Railroad of Death*, by John Coast. The story of an officer who remained at large for three and a half years with the Chinese guerillas—like Subedar Maniraj Thapa and others—is told in *The Jungle is Neutral*, by Lieutenant-Colonel F. S. Chapman, D.S.O. In general, the Gurkha prisoners' experiences varied only in detail or degree—often Third Degree—from those of the British prisoners. The main difference was that the Japanese were determined to persuade or force the whole Indian and Gurkha elements to change sides. The British prisoners were not expected to do this, but for them was devised every form of humiliating duties to make them "lose face," and for many, including most of the 2/1st British officers, the savage tasks of the Siam railway. We shall deal first with the experiences of the Gurkha officers and other ranks.

Two days after the surrender the Indian and Gurkha prisoners were assembled and were told that they were now entirely subject to the orders of the Japanese Army Command. The first hint was

also dropped of the kind of allegiance that would be expected of them. Soon, in the various camps, the plot was revealed and the propaganda let loose. "The South-East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere" was the bombastic term invented to cloak a grandiose scheme of conquest and domination, which was to embrace Burma (as it shortly did) and to sweep on to India as well. The so-called Indian National Army, or I.N.A., was to be one of the agencies of this conquest, and all Indian Army prisoners were expected to join it. The Japanese soon proved they had little to learn from their Nazi allies about forceful persuasion. When propaganda failed they tried sterner methods—starvation diet, solitary confinement, beatings and tortures—and all the time they held forth alluring promises of freedom, comforts and cash for those who would play the Japanese game. Perhaps no one who did not suffer the same ordeals can even faintly imagine what the temptations must have been—to be free from pain and persecution and from the squalor and bestiality of prison camp or cell.

Fortunately this is no place for passing judgment on those who not only changed sides, but also helped to coerce their late brothers in arms. Many, no doubt, as they claimed later, only did so for fear of their own skins, but their conduct had painful consequences for our own Gurkha prisoners in particular. Withholding comment, therefore, we shall pass on to pay tribute to all those gallant Gurkhas of our own and the other two captured battalions, whose loyalty remained unshaken by threat or torture. We may note here, however, that some of the I.N.A. units—described on our side as J.I.Fs., or Japanese Inspired Fifth-Columnists—were unwise enough to blunder into the avenging path of the two Indian divisions, containing our 3rd and 4th Battalions, a few years later.

The brunt of the Japanese Third Degree methods fell inevitably on the Gurkha leaders, the G.Os., and N.C.Os., whose conduct, the Japanese thought, was likely to sway the remainder.

THE GURKHA OFFICERS' ORDEAL

For six months the Japanese tried to shake the Gurkhas' loyalty by persuasive efforts, including propaganda, privation, and overwork. Then, as one Gurkha officer put it, they "ordered the I.N.A., or the I.N.A. on their own decided, to turn on the heat." On 21st August, 1942, all the G.Os. were entertained by "General" Mohan Singh, who tried both collective and individual persuasion, but in vain.

The G.Os. were then taken to a concentration camp, entirely run by the I.N.A., for most of the horrors now grimly associated with that Nazi invention.

They were subjected to every indignity, forced to labour on heavy tasks, and were unmercifully beaten with bamboos or knocked about with rifle butts. They were given no shelter at nights, were deprived of blankets and found sand had been mixed in their food. Roused and removed to the Detention Camp one night they hoped their ordeal was over, but when they still refused to join the I.N.A. they were taken to a third camp to suffer even more brutal treatment. Subedar (later Subedar-Major) Dilbahadur Gurung and Subedar Jitbahadur Gurung seem to have been picked out for special persecution. They were both repeatedly knocked senseless, brought round, and knocked out again. Dilbahadur had his left wrist broken while shielding Jitbahadur from what was likely to have been a final and fatal assault. But at last the I.N.A. guards desisted and allowed medical treatment to be given. Dilbahadur's insistent demands to see Mohan Singh himself were refused, but the G.Os. had won. The I.N.A., or their masters, had indeed realized that the G.Os. were unbreakably staunch, and had decided to deal with the N.C.Os. and men.

Holding their heads high, bloody but unbowed, the G.Os. rejoined the men in the general P.O.W. camp at Seletar (in the north of Singapore Island), and their arrival must have inspired the rest to suffer all that was ahead.

Before we follow them we must place on record here the names of those G.Os. who were specially honoured in the post-war *Gazettes* for exemplary loyalty and courage as prisoners of war. They were :

Subedar-Major Dilbahadur Gurung, I.D.S.M.	O.B.I., 1st Class
Subedar Budhilal Gurung, I.D.S.M.	O.B.I., 2nd Class
Subedar Jitbahadur Gurung	O.B.I., 2nd Class, and M.B.E.
Subedar Indrabahadur Thapa, I.D.S.M.	O.B.I., 2nd Class
Jemadar Jasbahadur Rana, I.D.S.M.	O.B.I., 2nd Class, and Mention in Despatches.
Jemadar Sunar Gurung	O.B.I., 2nd Class

In addition, Subedar Maniraj Thapa was awarded the O.B.I., 2nd Class, for his outstanding exploits as a guerilla leader at large in the jungle for three and a half years, as described at the end of Chapter Seven, Section III.

The titles of "Sirdar Bahadur" and "Bahadur," attached to the Order of British India, 1st and 2nd Classes respectively, can never have been more richly deserved.

All the above except Maniraj, who was never a prisoner, were tortured and stood firm. There were others, too, who suffered equally but, unfortunately, so much happened with no witnesses, or none left to tell the tale, that these heroes must remain un-honoured.

THE ORDEAL OF THE N.C.OS. AND MEN

On the same day that the G.Os. were removed to the Concentration Camp, about 700 N.C.Os. and men of the 2nd Battalion were collected in Seletar Camp for an intensive campaign of coercion. This started with a course of propaganda talks and lectures, mostly given by the I.N.A. and often lasting until 1 or 2 a.m. in the morning. Pressure and threats were increased when the G.Os. returned, but the G.O.Rs. held out resolutely for more than a fortnight. They even refused, as they had done earlier, to write cards home or to sign for Japanese working pay, for fear that they might unwittingly sign themselves into the I.N.A.

On 6th September, twenty-six N.C.Os. were selected for systematic Third Degree treatment, threatened with jail, and then sent back to their barracks "to think again" for three days. Still no volunteers appeared, so the five N.C.Os. whose names appear below were put into solitary cells for forty-eight hours, during which they were soundly beaten up and threatened with more punishment :

- No. 6506 Havildar Rattanbahadur Thapa (Clerk)
- No. 6774 Havildar Matbarsing Ale (Pipe Major)
- No. 6974 Havildar Puranbahadur Thapa (Clerk)
- No. 7444 Havildar Haribahadur Gurung (Clerk)
- No. 6995 Naik Budhsing Pun (Signals, since died)

Again there was no response, and this failure with the N.C.Os., following closely on that with the G.Os., marked the virtual end of the Japanese efforts to convert the Gurkhas in Singapore.

Other persecutions took place, such as that of Jemadar Bhagbir's party, to be recounted presently, but in general the autumn of

1942 saw the beginnings of a change for the better in most of the camps. The 2nd Battalion prisoners were never fully assembled. About 350 of them, captured earlier, were distributed in camps on the mainland of Malaya, including Kuala Lumpur, Raub and Port Dickson, but then, like those on Singapore Island, they were moved round to meet changing Japanese labour needs. In October, 1942, the 700 Singapore prisoners were split up with S.M. Dilbahadur Gurung and 350 men at the Civil Airport, Subedar Indrabahadur Thapa and 250 men at Buller Camp, and Jemadar Bhagbir Gurung and 100 men at Seletar.

Four months after the G.Os. and N.C.Os. had triumphantly survived their ordeals, the Japanese changed their tactics. Subedar-Major Dilbahadur Gurung and Subedar Jitbahadur Gurung (the two G.Os. who had been most brutally treated), together with two G.Os. each of the 2/2nd and 2/9th Gurkhas, were taken to Penang. There they found themselves as apparently honoured guests of the Japanese. They were housed in a very pleasant bungalow which the Japanese described as "a present from Churchill," and were given a staff of Indian servants to look after them. These servants were introduced as "orderlies," but the G.Os. had no illusions about their real status as guards. Gradually the Japanese disclosed their new plot, to induce the three Gurkha battalions to join the Japanese army itself—not the I.N.A., which the Japanese now described as inferior and worthless. Much propaganda was handed out about the Japanese and Gurkhas being of one kindred race, with common forefathers and similar appearances.

Subedar Jitbahadur and another G.O. were taken apart for private harangues and were not supposed to meet the rest, but they soon found ways of getting together at night. We need hardly say that these overtures failed completely and after a two-and-a-half-month holiday the G.Os. were returned to their Battalions (March, 1943).

Conditions were much better for both the G.Os. and the men during 1943, but worsened again from 1944 onwards, presumably because the Japanese were feverishly preparing to meet the inevitable invasion. During their first months of captivity the men were employed first in clearing up Singapore and disposing of the numerous dead bodies, and then in loading or unloading ships and stacking ammunition into dumps.

On one occasion thirty men of the Battalion, with five Indian lorry drivers and a few Japanese N.C.Os., took an ammunition

convoy into the jungle, where the ammunition exploded and all except two drivers were killed. Throughout the whole of 1943 the men were busy on a concrete air strip, and from 1944 onwards on airfield pens and defences. During the last eighteen months the Japanese stepped up the tempo of work (like the "Speedo" drive for the British prisoners on the Railway, as we shall see presently). The official nine-hour working day was usually extended to eleven hours and often no time was given for recreation or washing. No news of the outside world was allowed, but the men were in constant touch with friendly Chinese who smuggled news through to them, as recorded by their secret radio sets.

The G.Os. have described how the Japanese, brutal as they often were, appeared to be much afraid of the Gurkha prisoners. There is no doubt that the bearing of the Gurkha leaders had induced a feeling of healthy respect for all Gurkhas and a reluctance to try conclusions with them again. Subedar-Major Dilbahadur skilfully played on these obvious fears and refused to let the men be hustled or pushed about. Soon the Japanese took to issuing orders for next day only a few hours before dawn in order to avoid a deliberate "sit-down strike." Dilbahadur would often counter this by falling the men in overnight and telling them not to get up next day. When the transport arrived no one would be ready and the Japanese would meekly keep the lorries waiting till the men agreed to move twenty-four hours later.

The Gurkha officers' conduct throughout was beyond all praise. Having borne the brunt of the I.N.A. storm, they continued to shield the men from it. Moreover, they gave up a third of their meagre pay of thirty Straits dollars a month to help in bettering the men's lot. The men themselves were only paid when working, and then they seldom drew as much as half a dollar a day.

There was one unfortunate group in Seletar camp which did not share in the improved conditions brought about by its leaders' defiance in the autumn of 1942, but was subjected to a form of penal transportation. After a renewed effort at conversion the Japanese picked on Jemadar Bhagbir Gurung, C.H.M. Jobansing Thapa, 36 G.O.Rs. and 8 followers (together with 100 of 2/9th Gurkhas) for work involving special dangers and hardships on the Rabaul airfield in New Britain, which was constantly exposed to heavy Allied air raids. In March, 1943, a party consisting of Naik Santbir Rana, 18 G.O.Rs. and 2 followers (with 16 G.O.Rs. of 2/9th Gurkhas) was detached to New Guinea for similar work on an airfield. No doubt the Japanese in both places were becoming

increasingly scared of the mounting Allied air offensive and imminent invasion, so they vented their fears on the prisoners. The men were slave-driven for sixteen hours a day filling bomb-craters and digging slit-trenches (not for themselves!), and had to search the jungles for most of their food. Some men have described how the original ration of a handful of rice and a few sweet potatoes soon ceased and how they struggled to exist on "raw grass, snakes, grasshoppers, leaves of sweet potatoes, etc., seasoned with sea water." No fires were allowed for cooking.

The men all suffered from severely ulcerated legs, due to overwork and under-nourishment, but were still driven or beaten to work. Jemadar Bhagbir could only walk with a stick, but one night early in 1944 he escaped into the jungle with a man of the 2/9th. Their fates are still uncertain. One report stated that they had both been seized by Kanakas after being seven months at large, and had been handed over to the Japanese, who shot the 2/9th man at once and Bhagbir later. At a court of enquiry after VJ Day, however, a Japanese officer made out that Bhagbir had again disappeared during an air raid.

Two other men, with three of the 2/9th, made good their escape and after wandering about for about four months and getting separated, were rescued by Australian patrols. Both the 2/1st men were reduced to skeletons, but were well looked after in Australian hospitals in Lae (New Guinea), Sydney and Brisbane, before being sent back to India.

Many British officers and other ranks have recorded their unbounded admiration of the smart bearing and cheerful spirits of all the Gurkhas they came across in captivity. Captain J. W. Chapman, of the 2nd Battalion, has described how he found our Singapore prisoners when he returned there from the Death Railway in the middle of 1944. When put in charge of British parties drawing rations from the Indian Army camps he was delighted to meet many of his own Gurkha officers and men. They all presented a remarkably smart and soldierlike appearance—in marked contrast to many others. Chapman described himself as looking more like a tramp, but the Gurkhas at once rallied round and fitted him out with a complete set of uniform, badges and all. They gave him the first news of the Allied invasion of Normandy, but no one in the British camp would believe this after the fantastic, often wishful, rumours which had been floating about. One of our men then boldly broke out of his own camp, and in and out of the British camp, to deliver an English news-sheet

produced by Chinese in the City, containing the B.B.C. bulletins. What this meant, as Chapman said, to the news-starved British prisoners can only be imagined.

Three British soldiers of the 2nd Cambridgeshire Regiment—R.Q.M.S. C. E. Wellbourne, C.S.M. J. R. Stubbings, and Private H. F. Allen—and Chaplain the Rev. J. McLean insisted on collecting £20 from their scanty resources to present to the 1st Gurkha men as a token of their admiration and a tribute to Gurkha courage. It is pleasant to record that the Regimental Centre later refunded this generous donation, together with silver tankards embossed with the Regimental crest.

Captain Chapman was well aware of the risks he ran in making contact with the men, and suffered several beatings for his pains. He was even in danger of his life, but escaped with further "corrective measures." He was later sent with 750 British troops in a hell-ship to Japan. During eleven weeks of purgatory on board 50 men died and 200 went blind with malnutrition. The ship was wrecked by a typhoon on Formosa, but the survivors were sent on and were put to work in coal mines near Hiroshima. When the first atomic bomb fell the prisoners were all made to dig a vast mass grave for themselves, but the second atomic bomb, falling forty-five miles from the camp, brought miraculous deliverance.

THE BRITISH PRISONERS

The experiences of the British officers, like those of the Gurkha officers and men, could fill volumes, but again we must be content with a short summary. Captains A. Masters and C. G. Wylie, and 2nd-Lieutenants J. M. H. Gould and F. H. H. Dominy, who were all captured in Malaya, were first confined in Taiping Convict Gaol till June, 1942, and then in Kuala Lumpur Gaol till October. They were employed in charge of working parties, moving stores and similar tasks. The rest of the officers who were captured in Singapore were crowded into the British P.O.W. Camp at Changi, in the eastern peninsula of the Island. These were : Major W. J. Winkfield, Captain J. W. Chapman, Lieutenants E. Palfrey, J. C. Pullen and E. W. Pennell, who were taken with the 2nd Battalion; Captains N. P. G. O'Neal and P. R. Ommanney, and 2nd-Lieutenant L. J. Smith, taken with 2/9th Gurkhas; and Major D. J. R. Moore, Captain J. C. de la Mare, and 2nd-Lieutenant N. de V. White, taken while on the Staff. No hard labour was expected at Changi, but the prisoners suffered from severe overcrowding, and from under-feeding when the early stocks of British rations

began to run out. Very few of the Red Cross food parcels which the Japanese were known to be receiving ever seemed to reach the troops, and cash for extras had to be carefully hoarded for special occasions. In August, 1942, the Japanese inflicted "the Selerang confinement incident" on the Changi prisoners, crowding 17,000 of them into a very confined space in order to extort a parole from every one of them. It is difficult to understand the Japanese motive here as the prisoners in the Far East had no hope of escape with thousands of miles of Japanese-dominated jungle or ocean in every direction.

In any case their parole was held to be null and void after its extraction "under duress."

In November, 1942, most of our British officers were put to work on the notorious Death Railway in Thailand (marked on Map 34). The only officers left on Singapore Island were Moore, Masters, de la Mare, Pullen and Smith, either sick or employed with Malaya Command H.Q., which ran Changi Camp. (Pullen joined the Railway parties in the summer of 1943.)

In Thailand the officers were organized into working parties on the new railway to link Bangkok with Moulmein in Burma. Wylie and Dominy formed part of a plate-laying gang and the rest had to do ordinary navy work, digging cuttings, carrying earth and making embankments. Conditions were appalling, even at the start, and got worse when, in May, 1943, the almost perpetual rain of the monsoon was added to what the Japanese called "Speedo." This was a typical Japanese "English" word, meaning an all-out and relentless effort—or hell for the prisoner-labourers. Premier Tojo seems to have ordered this himself to get the railway through at all costs by September. It can be imagined how Tojo's orders drove the Japanese to a frenzy of savage activity which was to defeat its own object and cause the deaths of at least 10,000 among the British, Australians and Dutch, and probably 50,000 among the Asiatic coolies.

Cholera soon broke out in the various camps to add to the toll of dysentery and malaria. The Japanese were particularly scared of cholera, and often the first cholera case to appear in any camp would be shot out of hand. The Japanese themselves had cholera inoculations every six days, but considered once in three months was enough for the prisoners. Working parties, throughout the six months' "Speedo," were insisted on at full strengths irrespective of illness, so the sick had to be carried out to work on stretchers.

For the plate-layers a three-day period was taken up with a twelve-hour crowded rail trip to the site, thirty-six hours of almost continuous work with only a snatched hour or two for sleep in the sodden jungle, a twelve-hour return rail trip and a nominal break of twelve hours for a "rest" in camp.

The navy parties worked from camps near their work and these shifted as the line progressed. Even the "Speedo," however, failed to effect the junction of the Thailand and Burma lines, near the Three Pagodas Pass, till the middle of October, and trains were not running smoothly until the end of the year.

With the completion of the railway the Japanese in the home country became alarmed about the appalling numbers of prisoners who had died, and sent a Cabinet minister to investigate. No Red Cross or "protecting power" officials were, however, allowed to visit the prisoners. Fortunately, there was no longer any need for keeping prisoners along the unhealthy new alignment, and most of them were moved to better camps about fifty miles west of Bangkok early in 1944. Conditions were far from ideal even there, and eight hours' work a day was demanded for loading and unloading trains or stacking stores. As the Allied air offensive began to reach out for targets on the railway some of the camps became most exposed. That at Nong Pladuk was particularly "unhealthy" as it was situated in the centre of an area containing railway workshops, marshalling yards, petrol and ammunition dumps, and an I.N.A. anti-aircraft battery. The Japanese even refused to allow the prisoners to dig slit-trenches until an Allied air raid had caused considerable casualties.

Towards the end some of the Japanese tried to assume the role of kindly captors in the vain hope of avoiding the retribution in store for them. It is satisfactory to record that most of the tormentors who had not already taken the easier way out by *hara-kiri* were caught and convicted.

DELIVERANCE

Meanwhile, back in India an organization, known as Force 136, was busy all through 1943 and 1944 in attempts to introduce agents into Malaya, so as to gain contact with and support the anti-Japanese guerilla bands. Unfortunately, Malaya was only accessible by submarine until long-range Liberator aircraft became available in April, 1945. By then special Gurkha Support Groups ("ME 92") had been organized, under Lieutenant-Colonel L. G.

Young, who had been among the few survivors of the official escape parties from Singapore. Their object was to infiltrate, by means of parachute drops in the jungle, a nucleus of officers and Gurkha N.C.Os. to locate Gurkha prison camps in Malaya, release the prisoners and form a number of well-armed guerilla bands.

No information could be obtained, however, of where the various groups of prisoners were located. Major J. E. Heelis, 1st G.R., with his Gurkha Support Group A.4, consisting of Subedar Manbahadur Gurung and sixteen G.O.Rs., was dropped into the Malayan jungle on 21st July, 1945 near Serendah.

He made contact with the Chinese Communist guerillas who called themselves the M.P.A.J.A., or Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army, but was unable to locate any Gurkha camps until after VJ Day, 15th August. On 1st September, 143 of the 2nd Battalion prisoners were located at Kuala Lumpur and were visited in turn by Manbahadur and Heelis himself. Jemadar Jasbahadur Rana was found to be in command of this party and he was running a first-class show. Camp discipline, parades, turn-out and saluting were all on a regular 1st Gurkha standard. Great credit is due to Jemadar Jasbahadur, and also to Jemadar Sunar Gurung, who had been in the Kuala Lumpur camp and had only recently been transferred to Singapore. Both these Jemadars were among those tortured, and rewarded, as already mentioned.

VJ Day did not mean the immediate repatriation of prisoners from the various camps. This had to await the somewhat slow and methodical reoccupation of the country. The re-conquest of Malaya had been planned as Operation "Zipper" from India, but it was not ready when the atomic bombs brought a sudden and dramatic end to the war.

The attitude of the vast Japanese armies still under arms was too uncertain to risk anything but a deliberate military occupation by stages. It was Operation "Anti-Climax" for many of the civil population, eagerly expecting the return of a victorious army with banners flying and bands playing.

D Day for "Zipper" was 9th December, 1945, and the operation was carried through as planned but as an unopposed landing instead of an assault. The leading troops landed in the Port Swettenham area; the follow-up divisions went direct to Penang and Singapore by sea, and others to Thailand and French Indo-China by air, including our 1st, 3rd and 4th Battalions, as we shall see in Chapter Seventeen.

Gradually the prisoners were collected and repatriated. By

October, 1945, most of the 2nd Battalion men had reached Dharmsala and were at once sent off on three months' leave. We shall take up the story of their return, and of the re-birth of a new 2nd Battalion, in Chapter Eighteen.

But this final survey of the deliverance from bondage has leapt far ahead of the parts played meanwhile by other Battalions of the Regiment.

CHAPTER TEN

INDIA, 1941 TO 1945, AND NORTH-WEST FRONTIER TO 1946

CHAPTER FOUR covered the first two war years in India and was mainly concerned with the progress of the two older Battalions up to their departure overseas, and with the early days of the two new Battalions.

We shall now deal, in turn, with the similar progress of the 3rd and 4th Battalions up to their arrival on the Burma front in the autumn of 1943; the growth of the Regimental Centre; and the fortunes of the new 5th Battalion.

THE 3RD AND 4TH BATTALIONS

The 3rd Battalion arrived at Razmak in April, 1941, less than a year after the 2nd Battalion had completed its two-and-a-quarter-year tour there, which has been fully described in Chapter Three. The scenes and acts of the earlier "play" were almost unchanged, with only a new cast of actors—on our side. "Peaceful co-existence" with the more fanatical tribesmen was still a dream, only to be promised fulfilment when Pakistan was formed in August, 1947. Similar semi-siege conditions prevailed at Razmak, and the same snipers or Ipi-inspired gangsters were still around to worry troops on Road Open Days or column marches. These routine R.O.Ds. and columns followed the familiar pattern described in Chapter Three.

During the summer of 1941 sniping accounted for five casualties (one fatal), but most of Ipi's gangs must have been busy in the Tochi Valley, where our columns were operating from June to August.

In January, 1942, Captain P. R. Ommanney left with 60 Gurkha ranks to make up, with 60 from the 4th Battalion and 80 from the Regimental Centre, a combined draft of 200 to reinforce the 2nd Battalion in Malaya (it arrived in Singapore a week before the surrender).

From March to May, 1942, the 3rd Battalion had to endure a tiresome spell of garrison duty at Bannu while the Tochi Column was out on the warpath, but its own turn was soon to come.

Before we come to the operations of July, 1942, we must bring the 4th Battalion into line. We left it at Campbellpore in October, 1941, and there it remained for six months, doing spells of training or of digging Frontier defences near Attock. In April, 1942, it accompanied the 33rd Brigade to a pleasant summer camp at Shinkiari, in the Hazara foothills, north-west of Abbottabad. The 7th Division was mobilized in May, 1942, still as a Reserve Division with no special role, but with a view to full-scale divisional training the following winter. In July, 1942, the 33rd Brigade was switched to Waziristan to back up the advance of the Razmak and Gardai Brigade Columns on Datta Khel. The two young Battalions thus found themselves following in the footsteps of the two senior Battalions over the much trodden and fought-over tract between Gardai and Datta Khel.

THE DATTA KHEL OPERATIONS, JULY-AUGUST, 1942

(Map 37, facing page 302)

The situation which had arisen around Datta Khel that July was of a familiar and recurring pattern. The Scouts' Post there had again been harassed and isolated by an Ipi lashkar using tribal guns from the near-by hills. Parties of snipers disposed themselves, as usual, along the scrub-covered hills flanking the valley route which the columns had to follow, leading from Gardai via Mami Rogha.

The Gardai and Razmak Columns (the latter including our 3rd Battalion) advanced to Mami Rogha on 29th July, while the 33rd Brigade, with our 4th Battalion, which had been marching up from Bannu, experienced its baptism of sniping as it closed up to Gardai. Next day the 33rd Brigade passed through the other two to establish a camp on the Lwargi Narai. There it remained for a fortnight, doing Road Protection duties in both directions, while the other two Brigades carried out a series of sweeping operations around Datta Khel. The lashkar put up no serious opposition, and except for a few gangs of hardy snipers, it soon dispersed, taking its guns with it. While operating from the Lwargi Narai the 4th Battalion was frequently harassed by snipers and by Ipi's tribal guns, but the latter seldom did much damage.

By the 18th August the two columns had re-crossed the Lwargi

Narai to Gardai, with only minor opposition, and the 33rd Brigade had driven off to Bannu, bound for Shinkiari Camp. These minor operations proved of great value to both Battalions, and particularly to the junior leaders, who learnt to make fewer and fewer of the "41 common mistakes" liable to be made by a route piquet commander (as already described in Chapter Three).

Both Battalions became entitled, later, to the 1939-45 Star for these operations, but as they earned this doubly, in Burma afterwards, a Frontier (or Indian General Service Medal, 1936) would have been more welcome. Seven Mentions in Despatches included Captain A. I. Jack, 3rd Battalion, and Lieutenant-Colonel N. M. Macleod, 4th Battalion.

Unfortunately, the two Battalions had few chances of getting together, and they did not meet again until nearly a year later at Ranchi when preparing to move, in different directions, to the Burma front. This last year of progressive training and toughening needs little space here.

The 3rd Battalion endured a second winter in Razmak, and then three months, from April to July, 1943, at Landi Kotal, before it left the Frontier to join the 20th Indian Division at Ranchi. There, with its future fighting team, the 80th Brigade, under Brigadier S. Greeves, it had two months of intensive jungle training in final preparation for the Burma front.

The 4th Battalion enjoyed an even longer period of special jungle training. By the end of 1942 the 7th Division had acquired a new and active role, and after completing a series of inter-brigade and Divisional exercises on the banks of the Indus and the Peshawar Plain (October to December), it set off in January, 1943, for jungle-training camps in the Central Provinces. The 4th Battalion accompanied the 33rd Brigade (now under Brigadier Loftus-Tottenham, late of 2nd Gurkhas) to Chhindwara, between Nagpur and Pachmarhi. There, in the neighbouring foothills and forests (near scenes of Kipling's *Jungle Books*) it learnt the law of the jungle of a new and deadly kind. In June it moved to new country near Ranchi, where it soon greeted the 3rd Battalion. Lieutenant-Colonel N. M. Macleod left in July to take over the Regimental Centre and handed over command to Lieutenant-Colonel C. H. D. Berthon. In July, too, Major-General F. W. Messervy took over the 7th Division, with its now-famous "Golden Arrow" sign, and he was to lead it from strength to strength until he left it, for a corps command, at the end of 1944.

During September, 1943, both the 3rd and 4th Battalions were

on their way to the Indo-Burma battle front, but by divergent routes leading them to sectors 400 miles apart. The 3rd, with the 20th Division, went north in two parties (leaving on the 17th and 27th) to Imphal behind the Central (or Manipur) Front. The 4th, with the 7th Division, crossed the Bay of Bengal, sailing from Madras, to reach Chittagong on the 11th September—bound for the Arakan (or Coastal) Front.

There we must leave both Battalions, to record the growth of the Regimental Centre before we return to the Burma war in the next chapter.

THE REGIMENTAL CENTRE

The formation of the Regimental Centre at Dharmasala, on 15th November, 1940, and its subsequent growth, were only briefly mentioned in Chapter Four. A volume could be filled with the tale of its expansion, from the small beginnings of the two merged Training Companies, to an establishment stronger than an infantry brigade. But we must be content with an outline here.

Lieutenant-Colonel G. G. Rogers, the first Commandant, had to surmount many difficulties, particularly in the first year or so. This was a period of shortages all round: of instructors, clothing and equipment, in fact of all but the recruits themselves. Instructors and staff could be found only from the older Battalions at first, and then from the new Battalions as these found their feet. The demands were nobly met, however, when we remember the active Battalions' own difficulties mentioned in Chapter Four. For the rest, the Centre had to fight, like the active units, for its due share in the "priority war." Improvisation was the order of the day, and it took years before adequate housing and other amenities were provided, or the necessary weapons and vehicles were to hand.

Housing, in its broad sense, meant both tentage and, by degrees, hutting (temporary or war-time huts) to deal with the flood of recruits which poured in in recurring seasonal waves. In the first season, October, 1940, to February, 1941, more than 2,000 recruits came in, to be partially absorbed by the new 3rd and 4th Battalions in turn. The 1st and 2nd Battalions took 500 more as reinforcements between April and July, 1941.

Dharmasala Cantonment might have held about 2,000 men before the Tirah Lines were condemned in 1938 (as mentioned in Chapter Four), but by the end of 1940 these barracks were rapidly falling into a state of dilapidation or ruin. We have

recorded the first overflowing by the 3rd Battalion to Chari and Tanda Camps. Both these two camps, as well as the two unit lines in cantonments, had to be developed by stages to meet the growing strength of the Centre. The 1941-42 recruiting influx produced rather under 1,500 recruits, but in the 1942-43 season over 2,000 came in. Total strength rose to 3,000 early in 1942 and by 1944 had reached 5,000-odd. Before we give the final housing plan we must outline some of the numerous reorganizations or changes in establishments involved.

Extra companies were formed by stages, until there were six by August, 1942, including a Holding (and Drafting) Company. In February, 1942, came the second and most important stage of expansion, when three Training Battalions were formed, each under a major, and also an additional 7th Company. There were other changes, but with the addition of a 4th Battalion and a "new establishment" adopted in August, 1944, the Centre organization became more or less settled until demobilization brought further changes.

We can now set forth the final war-time set-up of the various units and sub-units with their locations. Their functions (where not obvious) will then be briefly described.

Starting at the top of the hill, Bhurtpur Lines, expanded to take 1,500, held the Regimental Centre H.Q., Centre H.Q., which included an H.Q. Company, a Duty Company of ex-pensioners, and certain specialists. Tirah Lines, also expanded to hold 1,500, housed No. 3 Training Battalion (T.B.) and the Attached Section. Chari Camp, half hutted and half tented, held No. 2 Training Battalion (T.B.), 1,000 strong.

Dropping down through the Lower Station to Chetru, we find the M.T. (Mechanical Transport) Workshop established near the Bridge, for a Company of No. 4 Specialist ("S") Battalion engaged in driving and maintenance.

Finally, Tanda Camp, with room for 1,000, half tented and half hutted, became the home of No. 1 Holding Battalion. Apart from the Centre itself, expansion provided for a new Combined Military Hospital around the old Tirah Lines hospital, where extra wards and other buildings were constructed to cater for 148 beds. It must be remembered that in addition to the 5,000 and more Gurkha ranks there were often fifty or more British officers, with a varying number of wives and families.

Recruits normally did nine months of "basic training" in one of the Training Battalions to make them proficient in all active

company weapons and fit to join a rifle section. Selected recruits then passed on to the Specialist Company of "S" Battalion for training as M.T. drivers, signallers, 3-inch mortars and intelligence. Some from the Boys' Company also did specialist training.

On completion of basic training (and specialist training for those concerned) recruits considered fit were drafted to the Holding Battalion, which had two companies. One was a Post-Basic Training Company which gave more advanced training, including an introduction to jungle warfare, and hardened the men for active service. The second company merely held, equipped, and drafted, the men as required. This company despatched a regular monthly quota of 100 or more G.O.Rs. and always held a second draft ready against a sudden demand. It also received, re-trained and despatched trained soldiers of the active Battalions who had been discharged from Base Hospitals in India.

From the end of 1943 onwards, drafts went, not direct to the front, but to the 14th Gurkha Rifles, a training unit jointly affiliated to the 1st and 4th Centres, and part of the 39th Indian Training Division near Dehra-Dun. This unit was formed in August, 1943, and the first draft from Dharmsala joined it at the end of December. 14th G.R., together with 38th G.R., 56th G.R., and 710th G.R., made up an all-Gurkha training formation, the 115th Indian Infantry Brigade. At Mohund, about sixteen miles along the Dehra Dun-Saharanpur road at the foot of the Siwalik Hills, the men were toughened in two months of intensive jungle training before they joined a holding company to await drafting. Their camp was gradually hutted with ancillary buildings, but the men learnt to make their own bashas (or jungle huts) for their future benefit. More than 2,000 officers and men of the 1st Gurkhas passed through 14th G.R. at an average rate of about 100 a month before this unit closed down early in 1946.

The increased responsibilities of the Commandant of the Regimental Centre need no further emphasis, but it was not until 1943 that he was accorded recognition as the "Father" of the Regiment, with the rank of full Colonel (the red tabs were even withheld for a time). He became responsible for all matters of Regimental policy, in consultation with the Commanding Officers of Active Battalions and subject to the approval of the Colonel of the Regiment where customary or appropriate. Within the Regiment he controlled the posting of all officers, except Regulars, and Lieutenant-Colonels' appointments, in which G.H.Q., India, had the last word—usually after consultation.

Until late in the war young officers from the various Officers' Cadet Training Units or Schools, at home and in India, were posted to the Centre for further training before drafting. Later, young officers went direct to Officer Training Wings in the Training Divisions, then, and after a period of training, to 14th G.R. for final "finishing" before being drafted. The Commandant was still consulted, however, about all officer postings to Active Battalions.

The tenures of the war-time Commandants were :

Lieutenant-Colonel G. G. Rogers, M.C.	November, 1940, (Colonel, May, 1943)	to July, 1943.
Colonel N. M. Macleod		August, 1943, to April, 1945.
Colonel F. M. W. Crooke, M.M.		May, 1945, to August, 1947.

The new Dharmsala of the later war years, like Rome, was not built in a day, but the rapid transformation of the whole Kangra Valley scene, as of the hill-top home itself, surprised those who came back after only a few years' absence. The peace and calm of 1940, mentioned in Chapter Four, had been almost rudely shaken by a series of "invasions" and by the mushroom growth of new military camps. These were not all Centre satellites of the type already described. The earlier and then regular seasonal invasions were indeed represented by the swarms of recruits making for their centres at Bakloh (4th Gurkhas) and Dharmsala, but soon came a still somewhat hostile (and occasionally truculent) crowd of Italian prisoners of war. Their camp at Yol, a few miles eastwards along the old foothill track (soon a motor road) from the Lower Station, rapidly developed into a sizable and self-contained township. It soon proved to be a considerable social asset, with its friendly community of guardians. There were, however, a few riotous occasions when the guards had to call for a show of force from the Centre to back them up, such as on one anniversary of the March on Rome, which brought the Fascists to power in Italy.

There was another very welcome invasion in June, 1942, when the 7th and 10th Gurkhas' Regimental Centres were established at Palampur and at Alhilal near by. The remarkable development of this entirely new Gurkha station, or group of hutted camps, "with every modern convenience" and excellent training grounds, was watched with admiration and a degree of envy by some old-stagers

who recalled the plans for moving our home to Palampur in 1931. (These and earlier plans were discussed in Chapter Two.)

In the autumn of 1943 all ranks were distressed to hear of the death, on 23rd October, of General Sir Charles Herbert Powell, K.C.B., Colonel of the Regiment for nearly twenty-seven years. General Powell's portrait and earlier record appear in Volume One, but he continued to take a lively interest in every aspect of Regimental life up to the day of his death. No Colonel could have done more to foster the interests of the Regiment and, indeed, of the Gurkha Brigade as a whole in the position, which he held for many years, of Senior (or oldest) Colonel of the Brigade. He was the moving spirit in persuading the Admiralty to name three successive destroyers H.M.S. *Gurkha*—all, alas, sunk: the first in the First World War and other two during 1940. He also fostered the close and friendly association of these ships with the Gurkha Brigade.

When the second H.M.S. *Gurkha* was sunk off Norway in April, 1940, her Captain, Commander (later Rear-Admiral Sir Anthony) Buzzard, received a message of condolence from all Gurkha Regiments, with an offer of a day's pay from every officer and other rank towards the cost of a new *Gurkha*. The Admiralty then decided to rename H.M.S. *Larne*, one of a new L-class of destroyers then being built, as H.M.S. *Gurkha*, but this, too, was sunk a few months later. Sir Anthony Buzzard has recorded that the Royal Navy will never forget the support which it received during its darkest days, and that no help came more spontaneously or generously from any other Regiments or communities at home or abroad.

Colonel H. M. D. Shaw, D.S.O., was appointed Colonel, in General Powell's place, on 27th October, 1944, and the Regiment owes him an equal debt of gratitude for his services as Colonel, and later as President of the Regimental Association at home from 1948 to 1954.

War needs produced many other local improvements and amenities in Dharmsala, hitherto withheld for "lack of funds," such as telephone lines to all the camps, and motor roads connecting them with the main road. Reports from the Burma front emphasized the need for all men to be taught swimming and watermanship, so swimming baths appeared in Dharmsala and in Chari and Tanda Camps. (*Note:* Only two per cent of recruits could swim when enlisted.) The Dal Lake dam was reinforced and jetties were built, but the boating activities were of a more serious

nature than those depicted in the old Mess photograph albums, showing officers in straw "boaters" and their wives in the period costumes of forty years earlier.

The idyllic quietude of the Dal amphitheatre was also shattered by the echoing fusillades of "battle practices." Alas, the Dal Lake continued to lose more in seepage than it gained in spells of dry weather, but it served its war-time purpose.

In August, 1944, the British Officers' Mess acquired a lady Mess Secretary, Subaltern S. H. Bradford, of the Women's Auxiliary Corps (India), who undertook this hitherto unwanted and thankless office for twelve months. Shades of departed warriors! Not only the feminine touch in the sacred edifice but a bar in the ante-room! (An unreliable report says that even the Mess Ghost deserted its post.)

THE 5TH BATTALION, 1942-46

But we have run recklessly ahead of our proper story and must belatedly introduce our 5th Battalion. This was formed in Tirah Lines on 1st June, 1942, under the Command of Lieutenant-Colonel J. L. F. O'Ferrall, late of the 2nd Battalion and the Centre (Second-in-Command). Its *raison d'être* was embodied in a special charter, issued in the names of the Maharajah of Nepal himself and of Lord Wavell, Commander-in-Chief, India, which authorized the replacement by 5th Battalions of the three 2nd Battalions of the 1st, 2nd and 9th Gurkha Rifles, captured at Singapore.

Starting with a nucleus of under 200 (from eight different units) and nearly 600 recruits, the 5/1st was an even younger battalion in its composition than the 3rd and 4th, so it had greater difficulties to surmount in its growth to maturity.

It was destined to disappointment in its burning ambition to get to grips with the Japanese and avenge the 2nd Battalion, whose place it had taken, for the fates decreed that most of its service should be on the North-West Frontier. After a spell at Tanda camp, from October to mid-December, 1942, the Battalion moved to Baluchistan, first to Shelabagh (Khojak railway tunnel and Pass) for a month from 19th December, and then spent the whole of 1943 in the unexciting routine of garrison duties at Chaman.

Lieutenant-Colonel J. L. F. O'Ferrall left at the end of 1943 to become Second-in-Command of the Regimental Centre, and Lieutenant-Colonel R. I. Macalpine took over command with effect from 8th December, 1943.

The Battalion went to Bannu in April, 1944, for nine months and then, after a month at Mir Ali, it moved, as might have been expected, to Razmak at the end of February, 1945. The 3rd Battalion had quitted Razmak nearly two years earlier, and G.H.Q. must have remembered the 1st Gurkhas' "claim" to it as a second home. The "record" mentioned in Chapter Three was, indeed, in danger of being spoilt, but this move was the final blow to the Battalion's hopes of meeting the Japanese in battle.

THE 5th BATTALION AT RAZMAK

We shall again save space and allow the 2nd Battalion's record of 1938-40 to do duty once more as a general background. Conditions had changed only in minor respects and mostly for the better.

Ipi's gangsters were certainly less aggressive than before, and there were thus very few actions or even incidents worthy of mention. Snipers were still active at times and the Battalion had three men wounded during the summer of 1945. There were now no medium machine guns with the Battalion, but their loss was more than made up by the possession of 3-inch mortars and a Carrier Platoon. "Walkie-Talkie" R/T sets were also provided down to platoons, so the whole procedure for Road Open Days and columns became much simpler and speedier.

Another change in command occurred in August, 1945, when Lieutenant-Colonel R. I. Macalpine departed on release and Lieutenant-Colonel W. J. M. Spaight (of 3rd G.R.) took over. Other senior officers had been coming and going since the Battalion's early days. Three seconds-in-command (all from 1st Battalion) had left in turn: Major V. L. Misselbrook, M.B.E., to command 3/8th G.R. in November, 1942; Major G. H. W. Bond to command the 3rd Battalion in October, 1944; and Lieutenant-Colonel A. G. Hiatt to command the 4th Battalion in August, 1945. In exchange, Major A. I. Jack arrived from 3rd Battalion to become Second-in-command in November, 1945. The list in Appendix 3 (F) shows how many British officer changes took place. Only Major A. Sharples served with the Battalion from beginning to end.

During the second "shooting season" in the summer of 1946, Ipi's artillery—which has already featured in earlier episodes—became more daring and began long-range shelling of the standing

camps at Gardai and at Razmak itself. The shells used were mostly solid shot and quite ineffective. The troops were only enlivened by what came to be Saturday-evening "hates," but the Battalion record includes some pathetic appeals from "fearful" civilian clerks for extra concessions and allowances now that life at Razmak had become "such dangerous confinement."

At the end of May Lieutenant-Colonel W. J. M. Spaight left the Battalion and Lieutenant-Colonel F. S. C. Macartney (8th G.R.) took his place—the fourth commanding officer in four years.

A Mahsud gang kidnapped the Assistant Political Agent (Mr. Donald) in June, and sniping incidents on Road Open Days increased during the next few weeks. Early in August Ipi's guns came into action near the Engamal Narai (east of Razmak Camp) in answer to our medium-artillery shelling of the villages responsible for the kidnapping.

Thus arose the Battalion's only close-quarter scrap, in which two gallantry awards were won.

The medium guns used positions just outside the Battalion's perimeter, and these became subject to persistent sniping from Wooded Ridge, a spur running south from the camp itself. A platoon which went out on the night of 6th/7th August successfully intercepted two Mahsuds with one of its four "stop-parties," consisting of Subedar Ramkishan Thapa, Havildar Karnabahadur Thapa and two riflemen. Both the enemy were shot down, but heavy fire was immediately opened by three enemy covering parties at close range. One rifleman was severely wounded, and the other was later found to have been killed. The Havildar also suffered severe facial injuries from splinters, but volunteered to hold on by himself while the Subedar carried the wounded man to safety. Returning from his dangerous mission the Subedar charged forward with the Havildar to recover one dead Mahsud's rifle, but found the other had crawled out of sight—to die later.

For their gallantry on this occasion Subedar Ramkishan Thapa received the M.B.E. and Havildar Karnabahadur the B.E.M.

This little scrap was really more important than it may sound, as it marked the first successful ambush against Mahsuds for seven years, and it had a very salutary effect. It put a stop to all sniping for a month afterwards.

There were many departures among all ranks on release or mustering-out that summer, but the end was clearly in sight. A few

more columns, a few more weeks of Road Open routine, and mid-September saw the Battalion on its way to Dharmasala. Arriving there on 23rd September, its disbandment was completed in the old Tirah Lines by 30th October, 1946. We shall find the 4th Battalion arriving at Tanda only three weeks after the 5th, also for disbandment, but we still have a long way to travel with the 1st, 3rd and 4th Battalions in the Burma war and the Far East.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE INDO-BURMA FRONT, 1943-1944

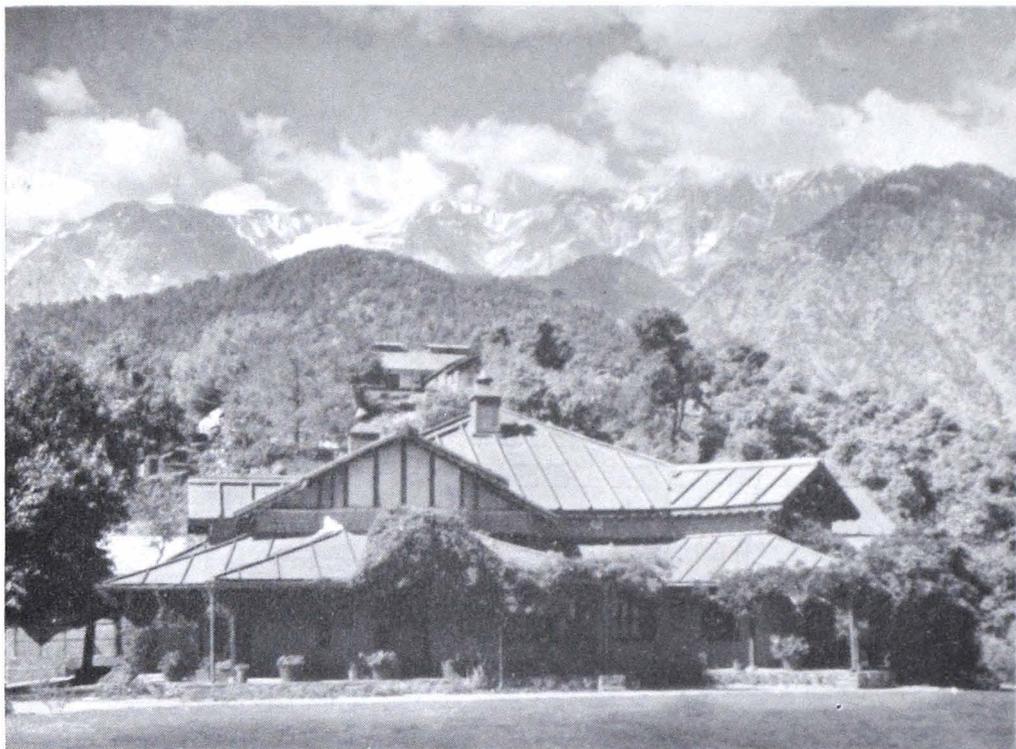
I. THE GENERAL SITUATION, AUTUMN, 1943

(Map 34, facing page 296)

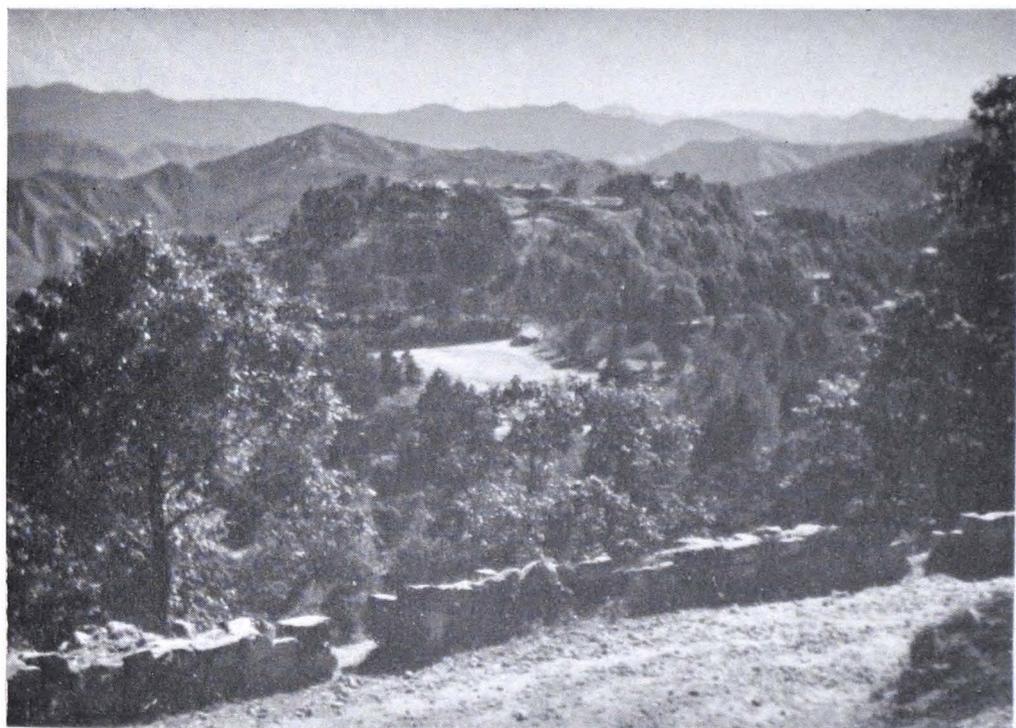
THE 3rd and 4th Battalions reached the Burma Front at a time of significant changes in the direction and command of the Allied forces in this theatre. A new South-East Asia Command (SEAC) had been set up with Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten as Supreme Allied Commander (SACSEA, or usually "Supremo" to the troops). Under him came 11th Army Group, which was re-labelled ALFSEA, or Allied Land Forces South-East Asia, in November, 1944, and the Northern Combat Area Command (NCAC) of American and Chinese troops under General "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell. Also under their own chiefs were the separate naval and air forces, with the implied promise of ample resources for a new triphibious strategy. The Supremo himself had just completed two years as Chief of Combined Operations, but his ambitious plans were doomed to one disappointment after another as his hoped-for resources, of landing craft in particular, were diverted to Europe. Transport and supply aircraft suffered similar "thefts," but enough remained to apply new concepts to jungle warfare: the supply of large forces from the air and the rapid transfer of reserve formations over long distances. There were to be no more retreats when troops were cut off or encircled; the supplies were to come like manna from the skies.

Lieutenant-General (later Field-Marshal Sir William) Slim took command of a newly created Fourteenth Army, which became, in effect, a "new model army" with its divisions specifically trained for their task, like the 7th and 20th Divisions, with which we shall be mainly concerned.

A new spirit permeated SEAC, too, inspired from the top and fostered by Slim—a conviction, soon to be proved in battle, of a man-for-man superiority over the misnamed "Jap superman." Under "Bill" Slim were two corps: XV Corps on the Southern

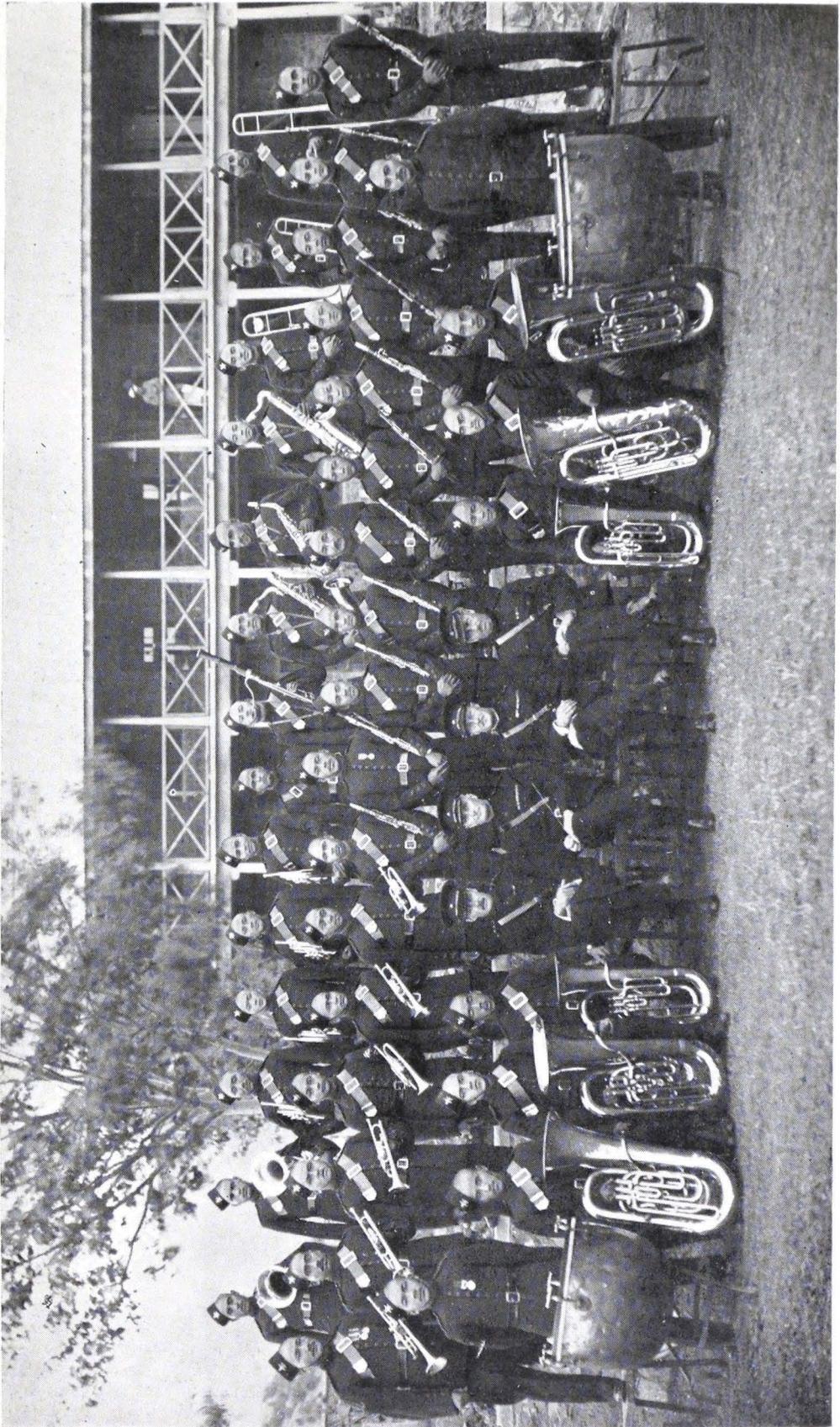


THE OFFICERS' MESS, DHARMSALA

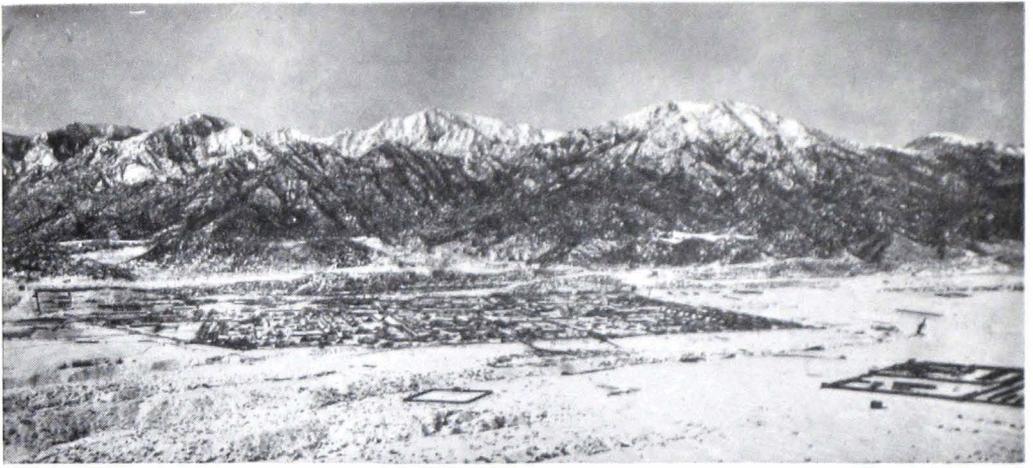


CHAKRATA : NEW 14 G.T.C. HOME, 1954

THE BAND AT RAZMAK, 1939
(in New Full Dress)



Capt. E. T. D. Ryder. Mr. J. Dennis, Director of Music. Lt.-Col. E. V. R. Bellers. Major F. A. Morris.



RAZMAK CAMP



RAZMAK NARAI



RAZANI CAMP



ARAKAN

“ Abel ” from Jap-held Tunnel Area (4th Battalion, 1944)



ARAKAN COUNTRY EAST OF THE NGAKYEDAUK
 (“ OKEDOKE ”) PASS



TREASURY HILL, KOHIMA
 4th Battalion Mess site under Treasury ruins (right skyline)

Naga
 Village



Village



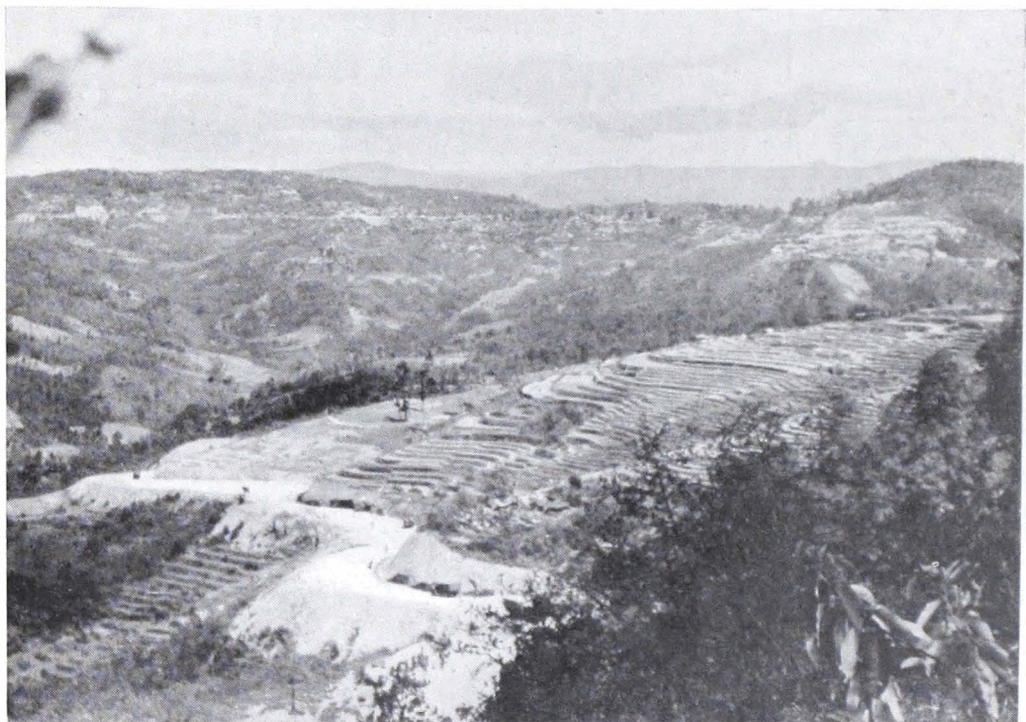
Gun
 Spur



Treasury
 Hill



Garrison
 Hill



KOHIMA FROM THE WEST



SHENAM, LOOKING TOWARDS SITA



SHENAM SADDLE, LOOKING WEST FROM "SCRAGGY"
Background : Gibraltar, Malta. Middle foreground : R.A.P. Hill

or Arakan Front, and IV Corps on the Central or Manipur Front, separated by about 200 miles of almost trackless hills and forests.

In the background, India Command, now under General Sir Claude Auchinleck (in place of Lord Wavell, appointed Viceroy), had relinquished operational control of the Burma Front and had assumed responsibility for organizing India as a vast administrative base and training ground for SEAC. As we shall have to switch from one front to another and then to a third, in the narratives which follow, we shall first outline the scope of operations in the opening phases of the 1943–44 campaign. It is noteworthy that Supremo soon abolished the distinction between “operational” and “monsoon” or close seasons for fighting: the enemy were now to be harried and hunted throughout the twelve months of the year, with no respite in “monsoon quarters” and with the balance of anti-malarial, etc., devices heavily on our side.

Tasks Set:

- (1) General Stilwell was to advance from Ledo at the end of 1943 to liberate Northern Burma and open up the road to China.
- (2) IV Corps, on the Central Front, was to secure the frontier and undertake a limited advance beyond it.
- (3) XV Corps was to advance in Arakan and secure the road Buthidaung–Maungdaw.

General Stilwell was also to be directly assisted by the first large-scale Allied air invasion by special troops under General Wingate—usually known as the Chindits—who were to be dropped in the Indaw area to disrupt the Japanese lines of communication.

The Japanese had their own plans, as we shall soon see, and they were to call the tune at the outset, although not in the long run.

We shall first follow the 4th Battalion to the Arakan Front, which was to be the scene of the opening moves leading to the first major Japanese defeat.

II. ARAKAN, 1943–1944

(Map 16, page 185)

The coastal tract known as Arakan had already earned an evil reputation, vying with the Kabaw Valley as the prize pestilential

area of the Burma Front, especially during the rainy months from June to September. Conditions remained trying in the aftermath of the monsoon up to mid-November, but then the climate became almost pleasant for about five months—the period hitherto accepted as the “operational season.”

It was a country of densely wooded hills and of paddy fields, and winding tidal creeks known as chaungs. The outstanding feature, which dominated the earlier campaigns and the ensuing one, was the Mayu Range. This ran north and south in parallel, often precipitous, ridges rising to over 2,000 feet, and was crossed at the outset of the campaign by only one metalled road—and that in Japanese hands—from Buthidaung to Maungdaw.

East of this range lay the Mayu Valley (or Kalapanzin farther north), about eight miles wide and a mixture of paddy fields and chaungs, of jungly ridges and scrub-covered knolls as yet unnamed, but many soon to earn fame as battle honours.

The Arakan Front had been the scene of a serious set-back during the first half of 1943 when our troops, advancing down the Mayu peninsula on Akyab, had been checked and thrown back behind their original starting lines. The Japanese had then reoccupied the lateral road from Buthidaung to Maungdaw and had constructed a chain of strong defences covering it, with deeply bunkered fortress areas near Maungdaw, the Tunnels (Mayu Range watershed) and at Letwedet. This was their so-called “Golden Fortress” line, which our XV Corps was setting out to capture.

During October, 1943, both the 5th and 7th Indian Divisions were moving forward to relieve the 26th Division at the front and to prepare for a deliberate and concerted advance. Our 4th Battalion, after disembarking at Chittagong on 11th September, went by rail to Dohazari and thence by marching stages to the head of the Naaf River estuary. No Japanese were met by patrols sent down the Teknaaf peninsula, and when 5th Division troops moved up in mid-October the 33rd Brigade went eastward into the Kalapanzin Valley, leaving a company of the 4th Battalion in the Goppe Pass defences.

The Corps plan of deploying on a wide front, with the 5th Division on the west and the 7th Division on the east of the Mayu Range, now demanded the rapid development of at least one good lateral motor road. The pack track through the Goppe Pass was soon made “jeepable,” but the Ngakyedauk Pass farther south was the one chosen as the main route. This pass, popularly

and hereinafter called the "Okedoke," had first to be secured by 89th Brigade of 7th Division; then Sappers got to work and by prodigious efforts put through a highway fit for three-tonners by Christmas and for medium tanks by mid-January. But while this work was in progress both Divisions continued to press back the enemy outposts, meeting little opposition at first.

In mid-November the 7th Division, having firmly established the 89th Brigade at the eastern exit of the "Okedoke" Pass, broadened its front, bringing the 33rd Brigade up in the centre and moving the 114th Brigade to the east bank of the Kalapanzin.

The 4th Battalion moved up from the Goppe Bazaar area to spend the second half of November at Linbabi, training and rehearsing for the next 33rd Brigade operation. This involved a night advance in conjunction with the Queen's in the early hours of 1st December from around "Okedoke" village (near the exit of the Pass) to secure high ground farther to the east, but this was unopposed. Then followed a period of intense patrol activity and constant minor clashes as the Japanese were driven or manœuvred out of one advanced position after another along the whole Divisional front. The 4th Battalion was thus engaged up to the third week of January, 1944, apart from a week's rest in reserve. It was often widely dispersed, with companies patrolling actively from their own "boxes."

Enemy opposition hardened as contact was made with his main positions, and patrol clashes became fiercer as the 33rd Brigade closed up towards the Letwedet chaung during the second half of December.

The 4th Battalion earned a high reputation for aggressive patrolling and skilful probing of the enemy defences. It drew its first blood (four enemy killed) on the day following its night advance, and its tally mounted steadily. On 11th January, Subedar Sasbahadur Thapa, with a chosen band of five, swam the Letwedet chaung and penetrated the enemy defences to within 500 yards of Buthidaung. The information which this and other patrols brought back proved of great value in later planning.

On the night of 19th/20th January, Lieutenant C. D. Nixon, with two G.Os. and twelve men, crossed the Letwedet chaung and engaged Japanese advanced posts on two mounds west of Punkori village, as shown on Map 13. The enemy reacted strongly, but the party was skilfully withdrawn with only four men wounded. Subedar Manlal Ghale and Jemadar Ganesh-

bahadur Gurung were awarded Gallantry Certificates for their prowess on this occasion.

This raid was part of the 33rd Brigade's allotted role at this stage—to exert frontal pressure on the Letwedet defences while the 89th Brigade pushed forward on the west and the 114th Brigade worked down the east bank of the Kalapanzin River for an eventual left hook round Buthidaung.

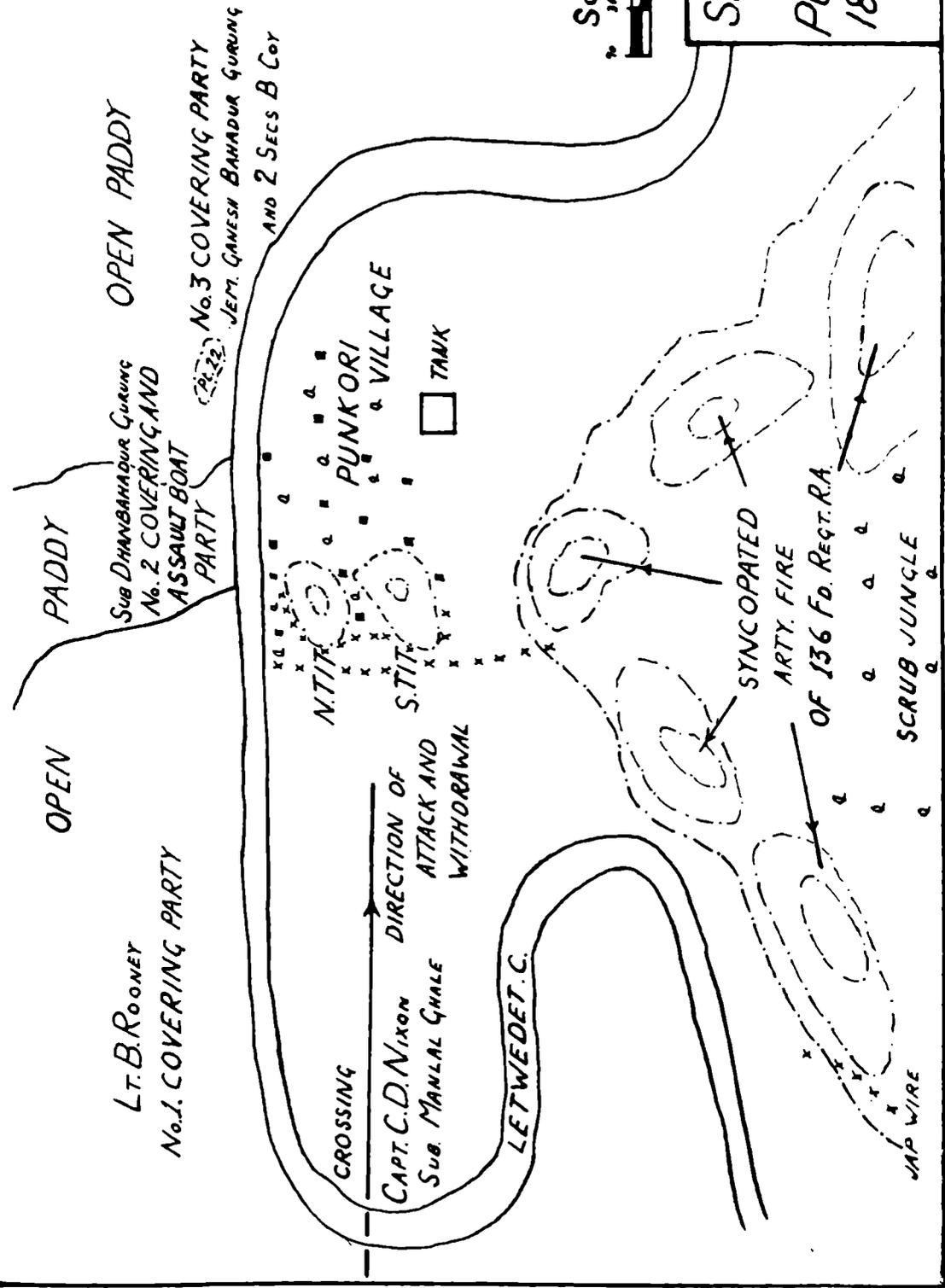
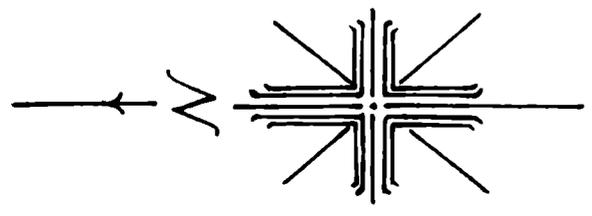
The next phase in the Divisional plan demanded the occupation of a hilly feature known as Abel, and others around it, to prevent Japanese use of the lateral road running via the Tunnels to Razabil fortress, then closely engaged by the 5th Division. (*Note:* The feature called “Abel” here, and on Maps 14 and 15, was first named “Able,” from its contour resemblance to the letter A on the map, but later records wrongly linked its spelling with that of a neighbouring feature “Cain.” This fact emerged too late to alter maps, etc., so “Abel” has also been retained in the text) (*see Map 14 and Plate 5*).

The K.O.S.B., of the 89th Brigade, gained a small footing on the eastern part of Abel on 19th January, and North and Middle Pimples were taken (by the 7/2nd Punjab) on the 21st, but the enemy remained firmly dug in on the rest of Abel.

The 4th Battalion received orders on the 22nd to stage an attack on Abel in the early hours of the 24th. Lieutenant-Colonel Berthon decided to approach from the north (*see Maps 14 and 15*) and cross a start line on the Kyathwen chaung at 0425 hours with two companies up. Artillery support was to be given by one 25-pounder regiment, one jungle regiment less two batteries, and one medium battery. The opening bombardment was to last from 0400 until 0430 hours to allow the foremost troops to close up towards their first objectives: the lower features of the two main spurs enclosing a deep central re-entrant. This is clearly shown on Map 15, but the detailed topography shown there only became known to the Battalion later.

The approach march to the start led over 3,000 yards of open paddy fields intersected by several steeply banked chaungs where the loads of sixty mules had to be removed, manhandled across and replaced. To add to the difficulty of keeping direction and recognizing the right chaungs, there was a thick mist which reduced visibility to about twenty yards. It is not surprising, perhaps, that the forward companies crossed the true start line on the southern arm of the S-bend in Kyathwen chaung nearly an hour late, having accepted the northern arm as their start.

SKETCH MAP
13
PUNKORI RAID
18TH JAN. 1944.
ARAKAN



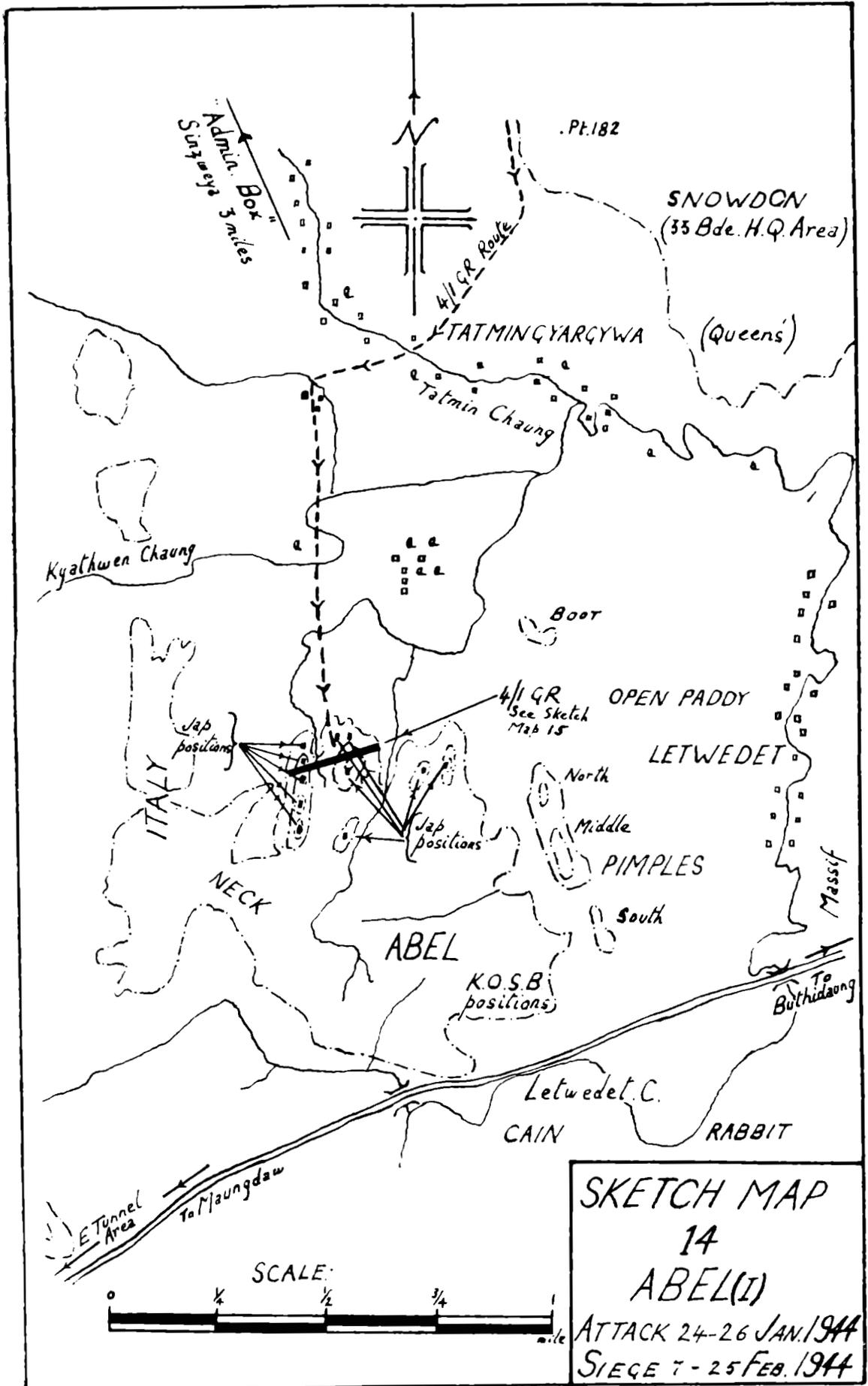
When they went in, a pall of smoke and dust from shell bursts had thickened the mist and reduced visibility to a few yards although the guns had long lifted from their set targets.

"C" Company, on the left, under Lieutenant C. D. Nixon, and "D" Company, on the right, under Major G. P. Careless—both under control of Major I. A. May—found their first foothill objectives unoccupied, and after a short pause continued the two-pronged attack. The men "swept up the two spurs, yelling like a pack in full cry" (in the words of an observer) and quickly pushed the enemy out of his forward defences, but then came trouble. Higher up and on both flanks the Japanese poured in a murderous fire from deeply dug bunkers and cunningly concealed fox-holes—defences dug before the monsoon and now invisible in natural grown vegetation. Dawn was breaking with half the Battalion still out in the open and no room to close forward, so another desperate assault was launched, to gain twenty-five yards at the cost of a casualty a yard. These were enough for the immediate purpose, but the Battalion was soon tightly packed in an area only sixty yards deep and 250 yards wide, with the centre nullah raked by enemy M.G. fire.

Continual efforts were made to extend the gains, but whether in daring infiltrations or set-piece assaults, advances of twenty yards on one spur and forty on the other could be bought only at a heavy cost. The Japs were immune and un-get-at-able in their deep defences, from which they directed a storm of fire and a stream of grenades.

The evacuation of the mounting casualties over the open paddy fields also became a hazardous business, but the stretcher-bearers stuck nobly to their tasks. Among the wounded were Captain M. J. T. McCann, of "B" Company, and Lieutenant B. F. L. Rooney, of "D."

Late in the afternoon the Battalion dug in with "A," "D" and Battalion H.Q. on the western spur and "B" and "C" with the Regimental Aid Post on the eastern spur. There was no change during the night, but early on the 25th "B" Company made another unsuccessful attack, losing heavily from showers of grenades (Subedar Pertabsing Thapa was brought back with twenty-four grenade wounds). Other blitz assaults by Tommy-gunners and bombers proved equally vain. During the afternoon (25th) the Battalion was ordered to withdraw from its clearly impossible position after dark. A covering party of twenty-five men under Lieutenant C. D. Nixon was left behind to distract



SKETCH MAP
14
ABEL(I)
 ATTACK 24-26 JAN. 1944
 SIEGE 7-25 FEB. 1944

the Japs, while the Battalion withdrew without further trouble. Nixon's party did magnificent work and kept the enemy guessing until it withdrew early on the 30th.

The Battalion's casualties had amounted to: killed or died, 17 G.O.Rs.; wounded, 2 B.Os., 1 G.O., 40 G.O.Rs.; or a total of 60.

Though denied its objective, the Battalion had acquitted itself well. All ranks had fought magnificently, and their "tails were well up."

The odds and the "impregnable" defences were against them. The answer to the deep bunkers had yet to be found, by painful trials and errors, in new gunnery technique (notably by tanks), in flame guns and the like.

After a few days' rest the Battalion moved forward on the night 28th/29th January to relieve the K.O.S.B. and also to occupy the ground which the enemy had defended so stubbornly and then suddenly abandoned. From the number of blood-stained rags and bandages found all over the position, the Japanese must have paid a heavy price. On 31st January "D" Company, under Major G. P. Careless, crossed the Maungdaw-Buthidaung road and occupied the hilly feature known as Cain, thus effectively cutting the Japanese lateral line of communication (other than by pack train).

THE JAPANESE COUNTER-OFFENSIVE AND FIRST DEFEAT

As the 4th Battalion firmly established itself on Abel, the whole situation in Arakan was about to be changed by a Japanese counter-offensive. Their Grand Design, known as Operation "C," had been maturing for some time and was nothing less than a major invasion of India culminating in the march on Delhi.

The initial blow was to be struck in Arakan, where the plan was first to encircle and destroy the 7th Division east of the Mayu Range and then to cut in behind the 5th Division on the west and drive it into the sea. Having, as the Japanese hoped, diverted Fourteenth Army's reserves to the south, their main blow was to be struck through the Central (Manipur) Front, to reach the Assam L. of C. and isolate the Northern Front. But this bold and ambitious plan did not take General Slim by surprise, except in scale and rapidity. All preparations had been made for troops to stand and fight in defensive "boxes" supplied with all they needed by air.

On our side the January operations were part of the 7th Division's role of applying increasing pressure preparatory to a shift in the weight of attack from west to east of the Mayu Range. The 5th Division, having cleared Maungdaw, had been checked in front of Razabil, but detached 9th Brigade to relieve the 89th in the eastern foothills of the Mayu Range with most of a Medium Regiment as well as the major part of the 25th Dragoons (medium, General Lee, tanks) preparatory to a concerted drive on Buthidaung.

Meanwhile, the 7th Division had formed a forward base at the eastern exit of the "Okedoke" Pass near Sinzweya, which was soon to become famous as the "Admin. Box."

The Japanese Arakan offensive, which opened on 3rd February, launched three separate task forces. The leading and largest, under Colonel Tanahashi (victor of Arakan, 1943), known as Tanahashi Force, struck east of the Kalapanzin River, by-passing the 114th Brigade, and swept round in rear through Taung Bazaar. It overran the 7th Division H.Q., but General Messervy and part of his staff escaped to organize the defence of the Admin. Box (four miles to the south-west) with a mixture of units and Service troops, in a siege which lasted from 7th to 25th February. Meanwhile, the second or Kubo Force struck farther north, across the Mayu Range, to reach the main Corps L. of C. near Bawli Bazaar. To complete the encirclement of the 7th Division, the third, or Doi Force, kept up pressure from the south and joined hands with Tanahashi Force in the "Okedoke" Pass area. A deep wedge was thus driven between the two British Divisions and both were cut off from the north. The Japanese-sponsored Azad-i-Hind radio station gleefully announced the destruction of the 7th Division and the impending march on Delhi. But the 7th Division remained unmoved.

The prearranged air-supply plan went into action at once and the main defended areas or boxes were soon getting their supplies from the air or by mule convoys from a brigade dropping zone, like the 4th Battalion. Relieving forces were soon on the move, the 26th Division from Chittagong and the 36th Division from Calcutta.

The 4th Battalion on Abel learnt of the Japanese thrust through Taung Bazaar on 5th February. Next day, in accordance with orders from Brigade H.Q. to pull in all isolated posts, "D" Company was withdrawn from Cain. Small parties, including men of the sniper section, were left behind, however, to keep up the appearances of occupation by lighting scattered cooking fires,

and also to hit back whenever possible. These parties, and fighting patrols operating south of the road, had some good hunting and steadily added to their score of kills.

The situation around Brigade H.Q. on the 8th was reflected by the demand for a company to be sent back to stiffen the Brigade H.Q. Box near Snowdon, and by the withdrawal of two platoons of 1/11th Sikhs (part of the Divisional Defence Battalion) from the Pimples, which had thus to be included in the Battalion area. The plight of the various separated portions of the Division—the islands in the Japanese flood-tide—sounded grim from the vague reports which filtered through, but there was no despondency on Abel. Tales came in of the fierce ebb and flow around the Admin. Box and of attacks or probings by roving bands in most of the rear areas. Abel's turn was bound to come: it blocked the main road westwards and forced tiresome diversions on the enemy's mule convoys. Companies were ordered to dig in and dig deep, and well were their labours rewarded.

The enemy did not start probing the defences in any strength until 12th February, but we may use the term "siege" as starting from the 7th, when the rearward zone became infested by roving enemy bands. The enemy drew an ever-closer ring of investment around the Battalion position and the opening of the rearward route for the passage of supply convoys (by pack mules) or other parties became a hazardous operation only possible at night. A narrow lane had to be opened with the help of the Queen's (from Snowdon) and a bold company of 24 Engineer Battalion, which remained dug in at Tatmingyargywa (*Map 14*). But escorts were not enough: fighting patrols and diversionary raids had to be laid on and routes varied. On one occasion a Brigade convoy unwittingly attached itself to a Japanese one, but was turned back in time. The supply convoy will earn an honourable mention later on. Merry, but unmalicious, cheers greeted the sight of a blaze near Brigade H.Q. one night, but these turned to groans a month afterwards—it was the Battalion's own baggage dump which had gone up in flames.

The Japanese had a bad shock when they delivered their first blow at the Battalion perimeter in the early hours of the 12th. An assault party of forty-six tried to rush "B" Company's position and bumped a timely alerted No. 10 Platoon. The spoils of a short, sharp action were: 26 Japanese dead, including their leader, Lieutenant Saki (whose sword became a Mess trophy in Dharmsala) and 2 prisoners, a corporal and a private—

the Battalion's first captures—as well as a quantity of equipment. A diary captured later revealed that this party had orders to capture “ B ” Company's southern spur at all costs, to open the road below for convoys.

The enemy began to work closer in, and between 13th and 18th February they established themselves in well-dug-in positions between the western perimeter and Neck (*Map 15*). Several sallies were made against them, without success. Major G. P. Careless, with Captain P. F. H. Thompson and Major C. J. Nixon, took out two platoons on the 17th, but ran into trouble approaching Neck, and Major Careless fell, riddled by M.G. fire at short range. Nixon crawled gallantly forward and brought Careless back under close fire, but to the sorrow of all in the Battalion, Careless died later in the day.

Hostile shelling increased on the 18th and the enemy began to close in on Cain. Our sniper screen there was withdrawn under pressure next afternoon, but a Japanese party of sixty, following up recklessly, walked into a D.F. task (prearranged Defensive Fire) and paid the price. Forward L.M.Gs. brought the score up to eighteen bodies. The enemy was stung to retaliation that evening with a half-hour concentration of artillery (including medium guns) and mortars on Battalion H.Q. and “ B ” Company. The earlier deep digging now saved casualties, and although No. 10 Platoon's post was almost obliterated it lost only two killed.

But the tide of battle was now turning near the Admin. Box and the 5th Division was thrusting through the “ Okedoke ” Pass. Troops in the 33rd Brigade area—Snowdon (Queen's and H.Q.); Mont Blanc, farther east (4/15th Punjab)—were beginning to take the offensive. Only Abel remained under close pressure. On 20th February Major C. J. Nixon brought “ C ” Company back from the Brigade H.Q. area with a fine hunting record. Among other exploits it had recaptured thirteen 3-inch mortars (of 139 Jungle Field Regiment) which had been overrun by the enemy. It received an immediate welcome in the form of heavy shelling, shared by “ B ” Company; and a fierce Japanese attack in three waves almost reached the latter's perimeter and the H.Q. post before being broken up.

The garrison endured its worst ordeals in the next five days. It was constantly shelled and repeatedly standing-to to repel one attack after another. The shelling by 150-mm. guns from the Tunnel fortress area, only 3,000 yards to the west (point-blank for them), had literally devastating effects on our defences, which

had to be constantly re-dug. These guns were deeply dug in and proved immune from counter-battery shelling or air bombing. (See Plate 5: Abel from Tunnel area.)

The enemy were apparently determined to capture Abel, probably to open a better line of retreat for their rapidly melting forces in the north, also perhaps to offset their failures elsewhere. They launched an impetuous attack early on the 22nd, and the struggle raged for two hours on five platoon positions at once, but they only piled up their bodies along our front.

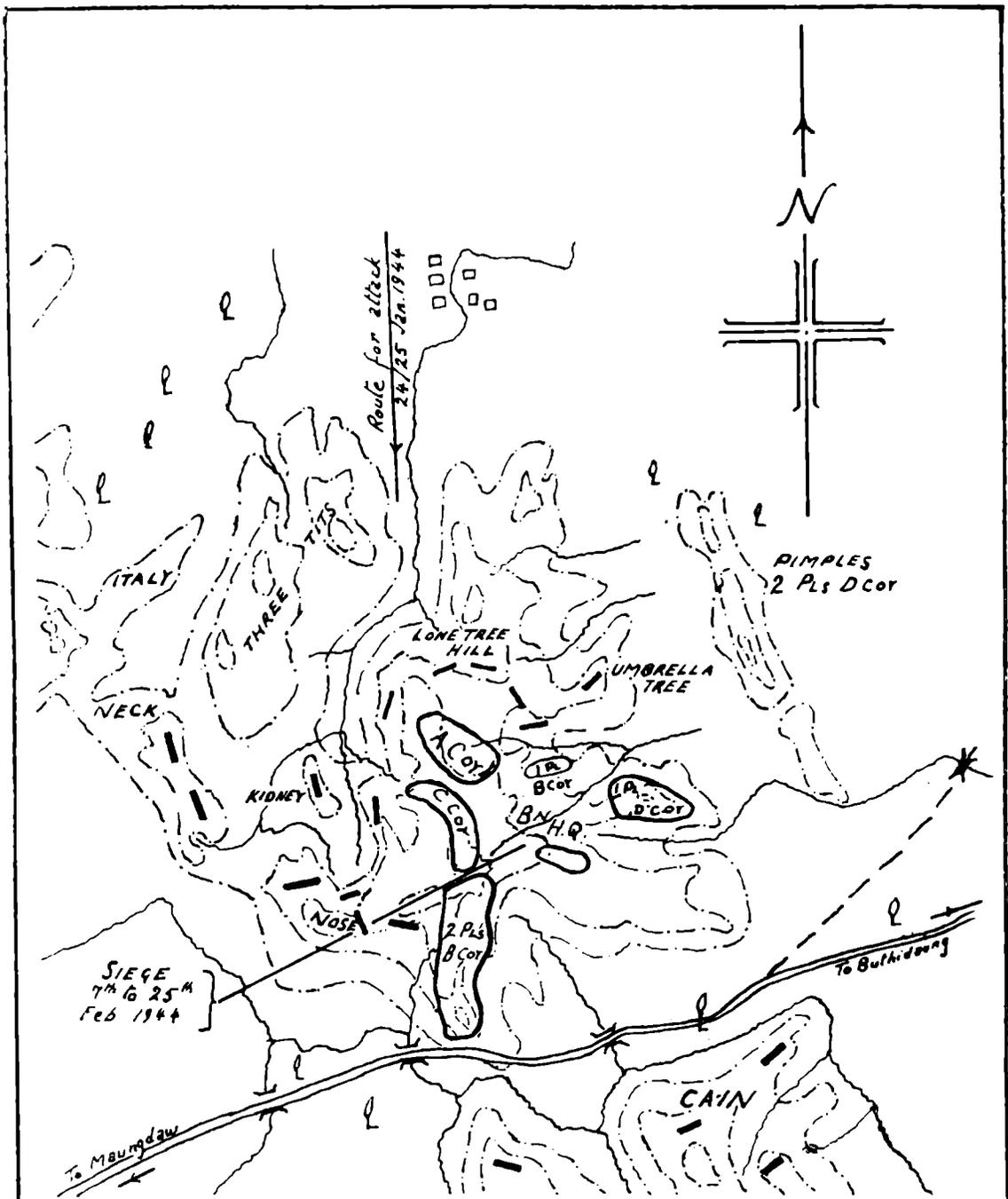
Unable to remove many of their dead and wounded, the Japs tried to cremate them by igniting the undergrowth. "B" Company was particularly unfortunate in the number of Japs who became even more noisome dead than alive. The spirit and conduct of the men throughout these ordeals were, as all our readers would expect, beyond praise.

We need not enlarge on the tactical details of each assault or sally. When all were in the thick of it, many brave deeds went unnoticed and unhonoured, and remain unsung here. We can only give a typical example of how Subedar Danbahadur Rana, of "B" Company, dealt with the menace of one assaulting party which was effectively bombing our trenches from dead ground close by. Leaping on the parapet, which was raked by fire, he carefully lobbed the last grenades of the Company's reserve on the target, and no Jap was left alive there.

Whilst another attack was in progress, on the evening of 24th February, Major C. D. Nixon was wounded but remained on duty until the Japs withdrew.

Having repeatedly failed to make any impression on the Abel defences, the enemy gradually formed a closer ring of investment and established positions overlooking the supply route past the Pimples. However, Captain H. W. S. Chedburn and Lieutenant H. W. Clark never failed to get the night supply convoys up according to schedule, entering Abel directly beneath these Japanese positions.

We might emphasize here that the garrison had been on half-rations since the "siege" began, and these had to be cut to one-third from the 27th, allowing each man only half a mess tin of *dhal-bhat* and two *chupattis* a day. It was not until a week after the opening to traffic of the "Okedoke" Pass on the 25th that supplies began to flow freely forward and replace the hitherto-limited air delivery by air drops. Water also was strictly rationed, and its source was subject to enemy interference. What with



SKETCH MAP
15.
ABEL (II)
SIEGE 7th to 25 Feb. 1944

short commons and only uneasy cat-naps serving for sleep, it is not surprising that the men were beginning to feel the strain just when the enemy's pressure showed signs of slackening. Dysentery cases were also on the increase.

But there was no question of resting. On the contrary, the garrison had now to assume an active offensive role to try to clear Abel completely. Fighting patrols had been active all along, but now the task was to break the ring.

In the background, troops of the 7th Division, reinforced by guns and tanks, were re-grouping at the end of February for a resumption of their rudely interrupted offensive on 6th March. But the garrison on Abel had to get busy at once, and from 1st March onwards attacks were directed on one after another of the Japanese defences, mostly to the north-west and west. These were, however, found to be as strongly held and deeply dug in as in our original attack, and little impression could be made on them.

As many as thirty M.G. nests were eventually located, but they could not be subdued by the artillery available. The main difficulty lay in deploying more than a few men abreast on the knife-edged ridges still covered with scrub and bamboo—not blasted or burnt out like our own positions in three weeks of bombardments. Orders then came from Brigade H.Q. to limit operations to pinning and distracting the enemy before and during the pending main attack.

On 5th March a mortar concentration was put down in a nullah north of Pimples which an enemy convoy had been seen to enter, and later nineteen bodies were found there.

During this phase, special Intelligence patrols, organized by Captain P. G. V. Bellers, were busily engaged collecting information of enemy dispositions south of the road. Havildar Hushiar-sing Karki carried out a particularly daring reconnaissance deep into the enemy's positions and from inside one of their defended areas. He was commended by the Divisional Commander for his feat, which provided a much needed item of information. (He was later awarded an I.D.S.M.)

The 33rd Brigade attack started on the 6th, when the 1/11th Sikhs (temporarily attached) moved up east of Abel to cross the road at 2215 hours, under a 100-gun barrage, and captured Rabbit (*Map* 15) and Poland (farther east). 4/15th Punjab then attacked still farther east, while the Queen's, having moved on to Abel overnight, captured Cain by the evening of the 7th.

The rest of the battle for Buthidaung does not concern us: it fell on the 10th. Abel was relieved—in two senses—but the Japs still clung stubbornly to the western portion. On the 9th an all-day struggle went on for possession of Kidney and Nose. The latter was won and then lost, but Kidney was finally carried and kept, thanks to the daring action of Havildar Gamfa Gurung. Outstripping the rest of the Platoon in a dusk attack, Gamfa and three men charged on to the crest while the 25-pounder supporting fire was still plastering the trenches. Gamfa was seen emptying his Tommy gun and then using it like a flail with deadly effect. His gallant conduct earned him the I.D.S.M.

The rest of Abel was clear of the enemy by midday on the 12th, but Cain became the subject of further dispute that evening. Our sniper screen, which had relieved the Queen's there, had to give way before a strong Japanese party of forty, but this in turn was successfully counter-attacked by "D" Company under Captain R. F. Gibson-Smith.

The Battalion was relieved next day and moved off across the Kalapanzin to join the 114th Brigade near Paledaung (north of Buthidaung). From this Reserve area it joined in the hunting down or intercepting of Japanese fugitives by fighting patrols and ambushes. Praise was again earned, from the Commander above, for some enterprising and fruitful long-range patrolling in which Havildar Hushiarsing Karki again distinguished himself. He received an I.D.S.M. later for his repeated feats of daring.

The War Diary of these last three weeks at the front contains daily entries of clashes and kills which cannot be described here.

Before leaving the front, tributes must be paid to those who supported, or were attached to, the Battalion on Abel. The senior Gunners, Brigadier A. F. Hely, C.B.E., D.S.O., C.R.A., and Lieutenant-Colonel G. Armstrong, D.S.O., M.C., Commander, 136 Field Regiment, earned the whole Battalion's unstinted praise and gratitude, and so did those forward on Abel—Captains R. Blair and P. Griffin, M.C. Everyone realized that the successful outcome of the "siege" was in large part due to "our gunners."

As for the Medical Officer, Captain N. Choudhuri, I.A.M.C. attached, it need only be said that the attachment rapidly became a friendly bond and an enduring one, as he remained a trusted member of the family until almost the end of the war. More than 180 wounded passed through his R.A.P., which was often shelled and mortared, but Choudhuri carried on, always cheerful

and serene, and received a well-deserved Mention in Despatches.

The Battalion had lost 1 B.O. and 51 G.O.Rs. killed, in addition to 5 B.Os., 2 G.Os. and 174 G.O.Rs. wounded, during the fighting in Arakan.

In addition to the I.D.S.Ms. already mentioned, awards for the Arakan fighting included M.Cs. for Major C. D. Nixon and Subedar Lachhiman Thapa and five M.Ms.

The Battalion was relieved on 3rd April and marched back that night to the famous Admin. Box at Sinzweya. It had left the Arakan war behind, as well as its siege-worn clothing, exchanged for a new issue, so could be as proud of its turn-out as of its record when paraded for General Messervy to commend its deeds and to present three of the Military Medals won. It was on its way back to wait at Chittagong (reached on the 10th) for its turn to be flown out to the Central Front. Up there the Japanese had developed their main offensive in the middle of March, but General Slim had been prepared for it. The 5th and 7th Divisions, which had been largely responsible for the first major Japanese defeat—despite their frequent “destruction” by Tokyo radio—were flown out in turn to reinforce IV Corps.

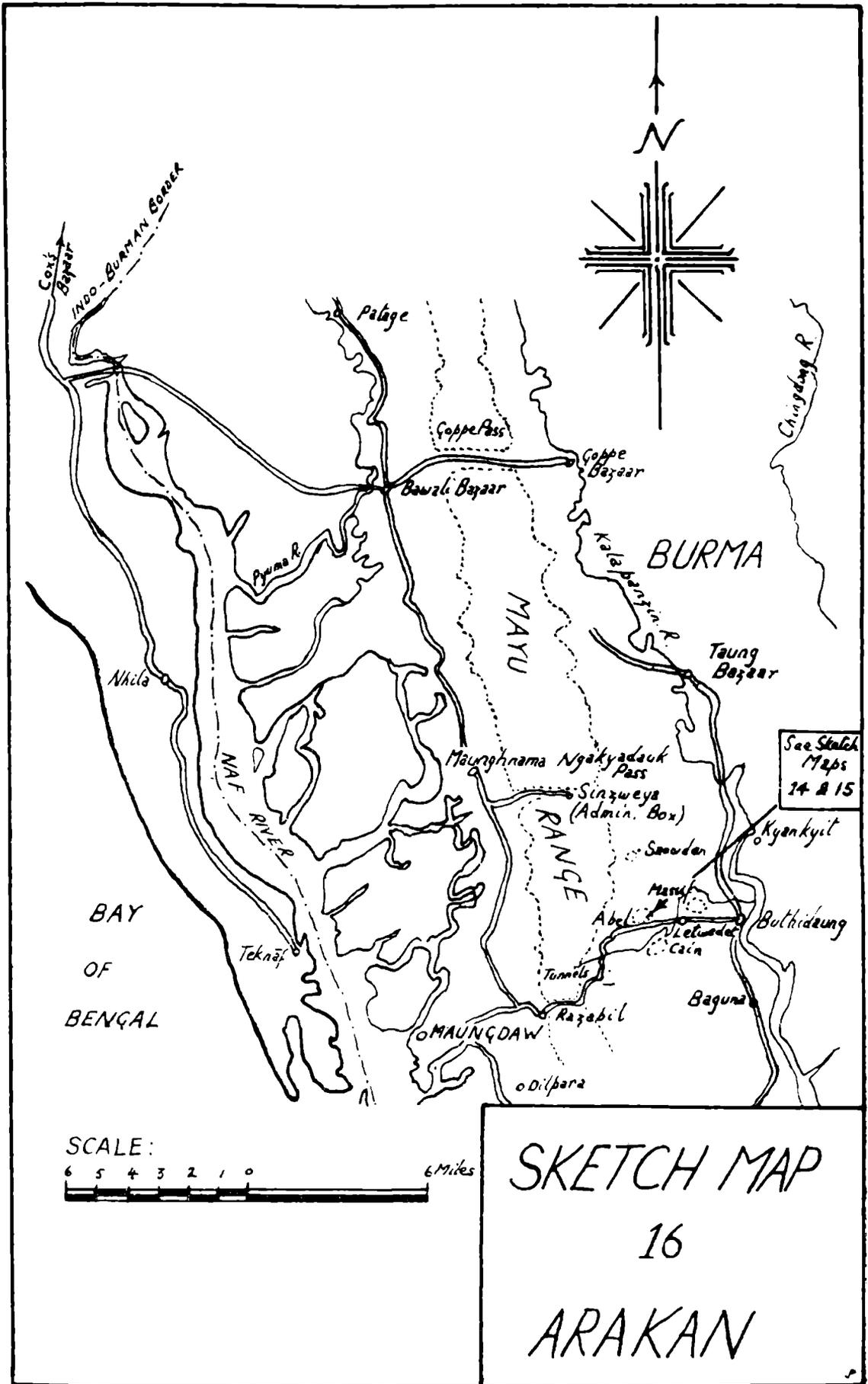
The 5th Division went first, in mid-March, and was followed by 89th Brigade of the 7th Division. When the 33rd Brigade's turn came, the 4th Battalion emplaned on 15th and 16th April, and landed near Golaghat, about sixty miles north of Kohima. There we shall leave it until we have caught up with events on the Central Front, and the 3rd Battalion's share in them, in the following chapter.

General Messervy's farewell Order of the Day is a fitting conclusion to the present chapter:

“SPECIAL ORDER OF THE DAY BY G.O.C. 7TH INDIAN DIVISION.

“*(To be read out to all ranks of 33rd Ind. Inf. Bde. Group on the day before emplanement)*

“Owing to the situation on the front of the IV Ind. Corps, it is necessary to concentrate sufficient troops on the Assam front to ensure that the Japs who have infiltrated through the jungles of the Chin Hills will be properly ‘seen off’ and prevented from achieving their object. This is to cut our main line of communication by which we not only maintain our own forces but send a mass of material to help China in her fight against the common foe.



SKETCH MAP

16

ARAKAN

“ I have selected 33 Bde.Gp. to go from this Division on this vital task. I have been promised that we will all join up again as soon as the crisis subsides, which is likely to be when the monsoon breaks.

“ I need hardly say how intensely proud I am of your achievements since your first action against the enemy on 1st December, 1943. Since then you have never failed in an attack, nor has the enemy succeeded in driving you from any one of your positions, in spite of many determined efforts. You have done your duty nobly, and have made famous the name of the 7th Indian Division to the whole world. Above all, you have killed a goodly number of Japs.

“ I thank you for all this, and wish you all good luck till we join up again.”

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE THIRD BATTALION ON THE CENTRAL FRONT, 1944

(Map 23, facing page 232)

THE KABAW VALLEY

IN the autumn of 1943 the 20th Division (General Gracey, late 1st Gurkhas) left Ranchi and gradually assembled behind the Central Front around Imphal, preparatory to relieving the 23rd Division in the Kabaw Valley.

After ten days near Imphal, the 3rd Battalion marched off on 15th October as advanced guard to the 80th Brigade, bound for Tamu. It spent the rest of the year, in outpost and reserve areas in turn, consolidating its jungle-warfare training, until battle drill and procedure became instinctive. Seldom afterwards did Colonel Wingfield find it necessary to issue detailed orders: a signal or a sentence usually sufficed. The response of his team will be evident in the following pages. Newcomers were apt to be puzzled at first, but soon found their places.

For the first two and a half months of 1944 the Battalion occupied a defensive harbour at Pyinbon Sakan, about twenty miles east of Tamu, with a forward company at M.S. 32, only three miles short of the Chindwin River. This was the only British position with a close-up view of the Chindwin, and it soon became a popular resort for visitors, from generals to war correspondents. Visitors used to find it difficult to locate the dispersed defences and bivouacs, so skilful had the men become in making these blend naturally with the jungle. Long-range patrolling of the west bank of the Chindwin on a front of twenty-seven miles resulted in several clashes and one successful raid on an enemy post by Captain E. C. Cubbin. In this affair five Japs and nine Burmese collaborators were killed. Another "bag" was a tigress killed with a Tommy gun.

The Japanese Arakan offensive early in February put everyone on the alert, but a month passed before the Japanese started

determined probing of the 17th Division area around Kennedy Peak (7th March) and IV Corps forecast an almost immediate offensive. There were still no overt signs around Sittaung, but the 20th Division prepared to conform with General Slim's plan, which involved drawing back the two forward divisions to fight a defensive battle on the rim of the Imphal Plain.

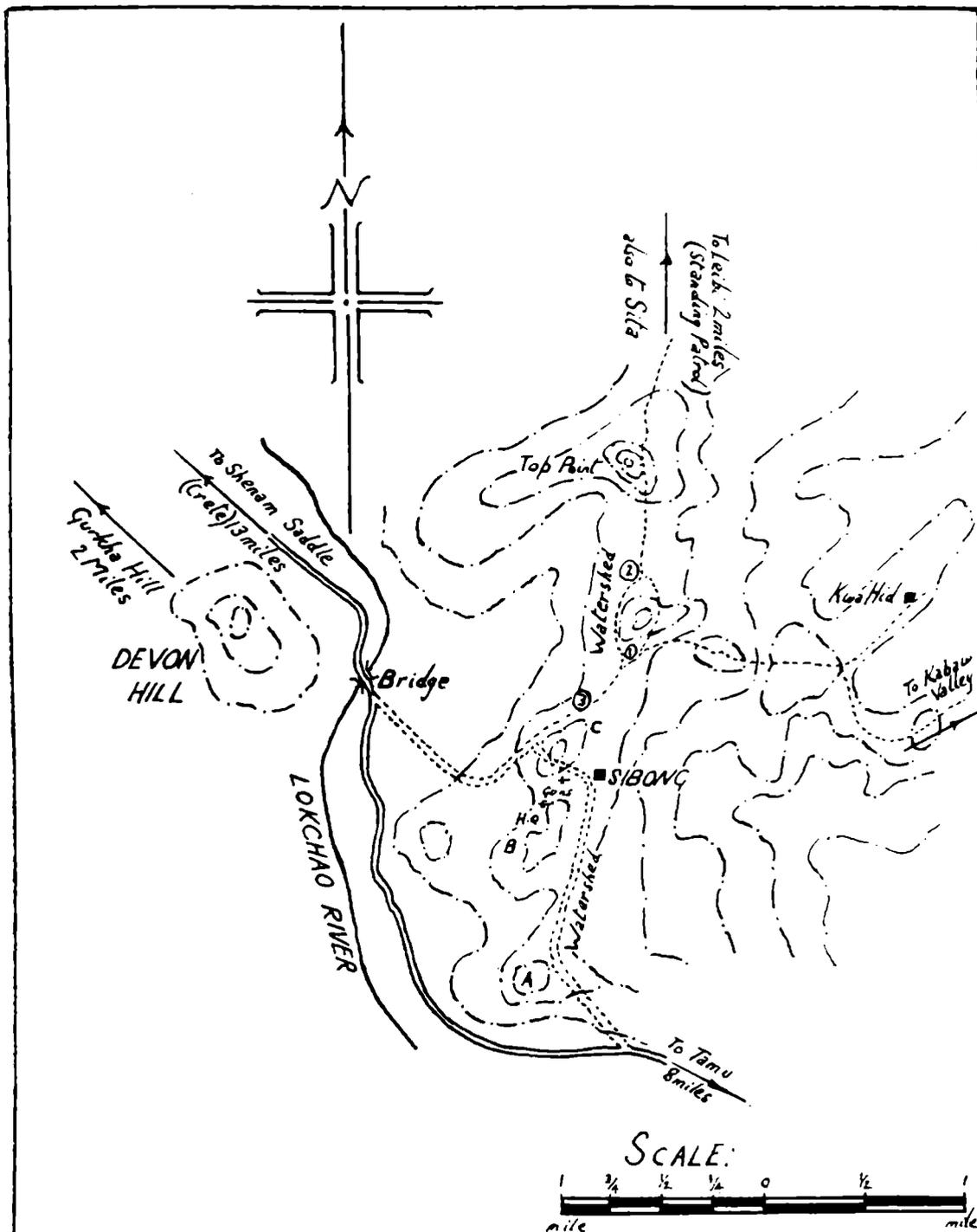
SIBONG

(*Map 17, page 189*)

The 80th Brigade moved back to an area west of Sibong by 17th March, leaving the 32nd Brigade still in the frontier area near Tamu (the latter withdrew on 1st April). On the 18th, "D" Company was detached from the 3/1st to operate with Ralphforce on the western flank, and the remainder of the Battalion took up a position on Sibong ridge, as shown on Map 17, covering the Lokchao bridge.

This was the scene of a minor action on the 22nd when a strong Japanese party attempted to close in from the north flank. It drove in the standing patrol at (1) on the sketch, blocked a patrol returning from Leibi at (2) and then ran into No. 13 Platoon, which was moving north at (3). After a brisk exchange, the enemy took up a position near (1) commanding the open clearing below.

Major J. Darby, coming up with "B" Company, found flanking movements unduly expensive in casualties against showers of grenades, so tried another method instead. The enemy positions, now pin-pointed, were bombarded by the Battalion mortars and supporting mountain guns, with a mixture of smoke and high explosive which soon had the desired effect of firing the scrub and flushing the enemy. Gurkhas and Gunners alike were soon getting good practice at running-man targets. Troops following up found a number of bodies, including that of a second-lieutenant, as well as a quantity of arms and equipment. Captured documents proved the enemy to be a special engineer unit of forty intent on blowing up the Lokchao bridge. The men must have been a picked lot: the bodies were all tough, six-foot specimens, and their loads weighed 100 lb. each. The closing scene that day took on an air of comic opera as a number of visitors arrived to form a cheering crowd of spectators with a grand-stand view from above the Mess. Blood-curdling yells and hunting cries speeded the Japs' departure.



- NOTES:-
- ① Position of Standing Patrol and later Jap Position.
 - ② Where Leibi patrol relief met Japs.
 - ③ Japs met by No. 13 Platoon.

A, B, C & H.Q. Coy Areas
(D. Coy detached)

SKETCH MAP
17
ACTION AT SIBONG

22ND MARCH 1944.

Nevertheless, it cheered up the men and gave them confidence for what was coming. It may also have discouraged the enemy from further probing before the final withdrawal on 4th April.

On the other flank "D" Company with Ralphforce had some sharp clashes with an enemy force trying to cut the road north-west of Sibong and to forestall the 80th Brigade on Shenam Saddle. In some close fighting on 29th March, Captain E. C. Cubbin was most unfortunately killed by a sniper on Ralph Hill, near Khongkhang. A party of the enemy did reach Nippon Hill (*Map 18*) but proved more of a nuisance than a menace during the 80th Brigade's withdrawal to the Shenam heights on 4th April. A road-block near Khongkhang similarly caused only minor delay.

THE SHENAM SADDLE

(*Map 18, page 195*)

As the 80th Brigade faced about on the Shenam Saddle early in April and prepared to give battle there, the Japanese designs had been unfolded and the IV Corps' counter-measures began to take shape. A whole Japanese division—not only a regiment as expected—had pierced the Somra hills to lay siege to Kohima by 4th April, but the fighting there belongs to a later chapter. Another division had passed through Ukhrul and southwards to plant itself astride the road north of Imphal. South-westwards on the Tiddim road a reinforced Japanese division had failed to prevent our 17th and 23rd Divisions from joining hands. The latter was pulling out to cover the Ukhrul road, leaving the 17th, with one brigade of the 20th Division, to cover Bishenpur and the Silchar track. The 20th, having lent the 32nd Brigade to the 17th Division and posted the 80th Brigade at Shenam, disposed the 100th Brigade in an aggressive defensive role near Palel, with its own H.Q. harbour near Palel airfield. The northern front astride the Kohima road was quickly built up by the 5th Division, recently flown in from Arakan, less its 161st Brigade, sent to the relief of Kohima. This somewhat complicated pattern has been presented here, as we shall be concerned later with most of these battle-fronts of the "Siege" of Imphal (which lasted until 22nd June).

This chosen cockpit, the "saucer" of the Imphal plain, was enclosed on the south and south-east by the serried ridges of the Chin Hills, over which climbed and plunged the one motorable road, vital to the Japanese plan, that from Tamu to Imphal.

(The Tiddim road was too long and difficult for their purpose.) Along this road the Japanese were about to thrust the powerful 33rd Infantry Group to open the way for their main artillery and armoured forces, which were intended to pulverize Imphal. On the Shenam Saddle, to dispute their passage, stood the 80th Brigade Group disposed in depth along the summits and narrow ridges through which the road snaked its way. (*Maps 18 and 19, and Plate 7.*)

The Saddle formed in effect a narrow ridgeway to north and south of which the steep, jungly slopes fell, almost sheer in places, to the valley a thousand feet below. Troops could deploy on only very narrow frontages, and headlong frontal (often suicidal) assaults and counter-attacks became the order of the day and night. The fighting was to be fierce and prolonged—six weeks for the 80th Brigade and ten monsoon weeks for their successors of the 23rd Division.

ACTION AT SITA: 15TH APRIL, 1944
(*Map 18, page 195. See also Plate 7*)

After ten uneventful days in the reserve area at Gibraltar, Recce and Malta, the 3/1st was called on to relieve the garrison of a detached post known as Sita, about fifteen miles by jeep track north-east of the forward Shenam defences. Major L. J. B. Johnson and Captain C. U. Blascheck set out on 14th April with "A" Company, one mortar section, a medical party (Lieutenant Datta) and a Brigade signals detachment. The position at Sita, which had been selected, dug and wired by another unit, was tactically unsound, as it was overlooked on three sides by heavily wooded hills. But "A" Company, arriving at dusk, could do little about it except to improve the existing defences.

The post as found consisted of an outer ring of weapon pits, about fifty yards in diameter, connected by shallow crawl trenches. There were no communication trenches and no overhead cover except tarpaulins. The defensive wire was within a few feet of the defences, and beyond it lay thick jungle liberally sown with anti-personnel mines. The lack of a minefield chart prevented further jungle clearing and proved awkward later.

At midnight of the 14th/15th "A" Company turned in to rest after four hours' work since marching eighteen miles from Recce Hill. The wind rustling the leaves in the trees drowned all other sounds in the surrounding jungle. Suddenly, at 0330 hours, a

shell burst with a shattering roar among the tree-tops, more followed, one after another, until the whole position was being steadily bombarded. One 75-mm. infantry gun was firing point-blank from the east, other 75-mm. mountain guns from farther away to the east and south-east. Many of the shells were bursting on impact with the trees inside the position, and were the chief causes of casualties, owing to lack of overhead cover; others burst harmlessly on the ground.

"A" Company stood on the alert, wondering if this was a strafe or a prelude to something worse. The shelling continued for an hour and a half, and when at 0500 mortars chimed in and began to pound the post, "A" Company were left in no doubt that they were being "softened up" for an attack. Suddenly, six M.M.Gs. opened up from three different directions, but most of the bullets cracked harmlessly through the leaves and branches, only to add to the bedlam.

Warning of the expected assault came from the explosion of A.P. mines all round the position. Then shower on shower of hand grenades were followed by a line of attacking infantry led by officers with their drawn swords flashing in the glare of bursting bombs. The line melted as it met the deadly fire of "A" Company, but its place was taken by wave after wave of yelling Japs hurling themselves forward in fanatical determination to breach the defences, only to be mown down in clusters. The enemy reached the torn and battered wire in places, but none got through.

There was a short lull, during which the perimeter posts were re-stocked with ammunition and grenades, before the next attack, which met the same fate. There was then a welcome interlude of semi-comic relief when the Japs pushed forward a number of J.I.Fs. ("Japanese inspired fifth-columnists," or Indian prisoners of war turned traitors) to call on the Company to surrender. The ensuing repartee was lively and amusing, the men on the perimeter yelling their defiance with unprintable comments on J.I.Fs. and Japs alike.

Then at about 0530 a new plot seemed to be hatching, to the accompaniment of much jabbering and waving of swords. No. 7 Platoon reported that a party of about twenty enemy was trying to place Bangalore torpedoes under the wire. This was on the most battered part of the perimeter, where ammunition and grenades were running low, and the situation was critical. The Platoon Commander, No. 2053 Havildar Minbahadur Rana, saw this at once, and shaking off those who tried to hold him back—

saying it would be suicidal—he seized two sandbags full of grenades, found an equally fire-eating medical orderly, Rifleman Narbahadur Thapa, eager to help him, and led the way over the parapet to the threatened wire. There, standing up alone and fully exposed, he flung grenade after grenade on the bunch of crouching enemy trying to place the explosives under the remaining wire. Above the screams of the Japanese wounded and the detonation of his own bursting bombs, he shouted orders to his 2-inch mortar and brought his Bren guns to bear on the enemy, which he alone could see in the flashes of the explosions, massing in the jungle but out of bombing range. His last bomb thrown, he was about to return when he was brought down by a sniper's bullet and killed instantly. Narbahadur calmly picked off the sniper, and then, in defiance of orders to get back under cover at once, picked up and brought back the Havildar's body, saying Minbahadur had earned a Victoria Cross and must be brought back. This echoed the thoughts of everyone there, but in the end Minbahadur received only a posthumous Mention in Despatches. The irrepressible Narbahadur received an I.D.S.M., but died of wounds received later, on 29th May.

Captain C. U. Blascheck, who was himself an inspiration to the defenders, has written: "If Minbahadur had not gone forward, we could not have known that the main assault was getting ready, and in half a minute the wire would have been blown and a company could have stormed the position." Captain Blascheck, who was soon to distinguish himself again at Scraggy, received a well-earned M.C.

The only reinforcements to plug the gap were the Company H.Q. of five and a few stretcher-bearers with the M.O., Lieutenant Datta, who did outstanding work tending the wounded with no covered Aid Post. It was just getting light at 0630 when a final attack was beaten back, but the enemy kept the post under the fire of M.M.Gs. and snipers while they tried to remove their casualties. Soon after 0700 they withdrew into the jungle, leaving a tired but triumphant company in undisputed possession, with their ten killed and seventeen wounded.

By then the Madrassi signallers had at last managed to get through by wireless, after vainly trying for three hours to summon help from the Battalion. These men earned everyone's praise, unmoved by the inferno and imperturbable even when two percussion fuses, with shells attached, penetrated their trench and hung perilously over their heads.

But " A " Company had to wait all day in grim resignation, and the sun was setting before the promised relief column appeared.

Back in the Battalion there was inevitable delay in collecting scattered companies and roping in a Sapper section and a jungle-artillery troop, so the relief column could not set off until midday. The column was shelled near Cyprus and had three men wounded, but reached the western end of Sita ridge without further trouble. There, " D " Company (Major D. W. Grove) was sent due east towards the post, while the remainder, with the jeeps, followed the track round the north of the ridge.

" D " Company's stealthy approach to the post gave no one there a chance to warn it about mines until one blew up the two leading scouts. A path through the minefield was then cleared by throwing logs and firing L.M.Gs., and " D " Company gingerly entered the position. The rest of the column had several sharp clashes and did some good killing before it got through towards dusk.

The day was rounded off by a bugle call of " Charge " as the last of the enemy made off eastward, but only a few sections were in a position to see them or follow up in the failing light.

The main Battalion harbour was formed round the jeep column at the track junction north of the post, but after dark " B " Company moved up to reinforce the post garrison. Unfortunately, warning shouts went unheeded, and some of the leading men suffered the same fate as those of " D " Company before the rest could be piloted in safely.

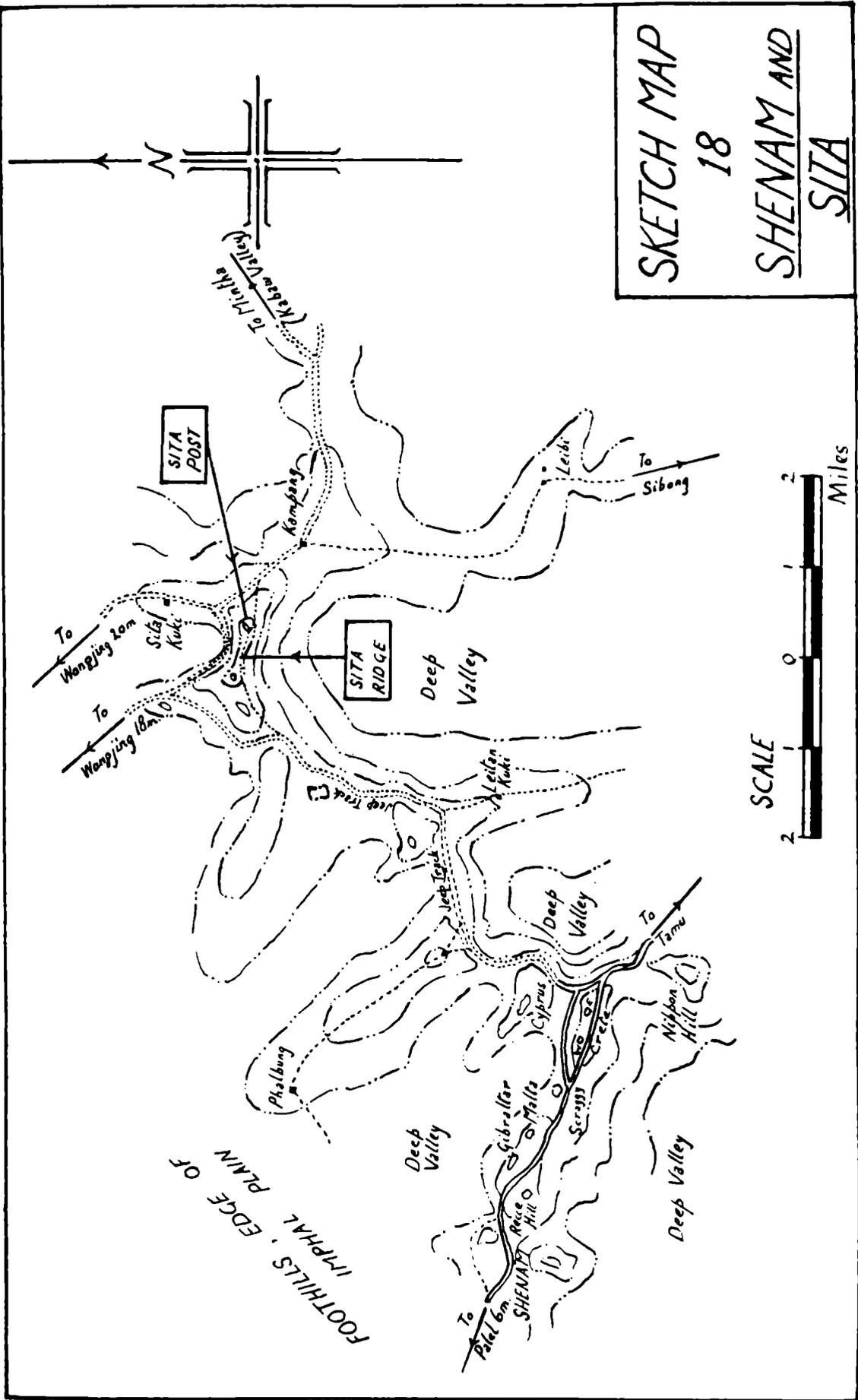
During the night 15th/16th the enemy probed along the tracks leading to the harbour, but few were allowed to return. At daylight, fighting patrols swept all the neighbouring tracks. Ten Japanese bodies were found at the scene of a " C " Company clash to the north-west and a few more prowlers were added to the bag. Some wounded Japanese crouched with rifle at the ready for a last shot, and a grenade handy for the final act of *hara-kiri*.

Meanwhile, the area round the post was searched and cleared as far as the danger from mines allowed. Japanese corpses and remains lay thick all around, and a full count proved too long and gruesome a task. On Havildar Minbahadur's sector alone over 200 bodies were counted, and these included one major, three captains, seven lieutenants and two second-lieutenants. At least eighty bodies could also be seen in the mined jungle, where they

SKETCH MAP

18

SHENAM AND SITA



had to be left to rot. There was also an abundance of "loot," including three infantry guns and quantities of swords, automatics and weapons of all kinds.

In a diary captured later the Japanese admitted a loss of over 300 killed, including the thirteen officers, and one elephant, with a total casualty list of over 500. The attacking force consisted of two battalions with a divisional engineer platoon of thirty which was completely wiped out, with its commander, by Minbahadur's exploit.

In addition to "A" Company's casualties already recorded, the Battalion lost six killed and thirteen wounded (including one G.O.). Colonel Wingfield summed up afterwards: "The Japanese plan suits us well; there is a nice interval between each wave, in which our men can get up their ammunition and refill magazines. Then we are ready for the next lot."

The Battalion returned to Shenam on 17th April, leaving "A" Company, its original garrison, in the re-stocked and repaired post, but in a "climate" which the rotting bodies rendered daily less salubrious.

On the 22nd, "A" Company rejoined the Battalion, which was due to relieve 1st Devons in the forward area next day. The situation there was unstable. Nippon Hill had been brilliantly stormed, and its garrison exterminated by the Devons, only to be lost again. Crete East and Umbrella Hill had then fallen in quick succession. The Devons still clung to Crete West, with the enemy in close contact, and also held positions in depth back to Reserve Hill. They had fought long and gallantly, but needed relief.

CRETE WEST

(Map 19, page 205)

The Battalion moved up during the 23rd April and took over the forward defences, "B" Company relieving the garrison of Crete West after dark. This position was overlooked by enemy-held hills and was also exposed to close-range artillery and M.G. fire from Crete East, so daylight movement above ground was suicidal.

For the next four days Crete West was subjected to constant shelling, with special evening "hates," working up to heavier concentrations on the 26th and 27th, during which "B" Company lost one killed and six wounded. The garrison got little

rest and no sleep with patrol probings and exchanges of fire. Remarks were also exchanged, and the Japs frequently exhorted our men to stop digging and to give up the hopeless struggle!

The Crete West defences had been only partly dug and very lightly wired, so were far from ready for protracted defence. Between the 23rd and 27th considerable improvements were made and overhead cover built. Digging was in rock and progress painfully slow, but by dusk on the 27th weapon pits were complete, though communication trenches and the Aid Post were not finished. There were only enough anti-personnel mines available to block the track from Crete East, which was also mined against tanks.

The enemy were entrenched and wired in on Nippon Peak, Crete East and Cyprus, and were believed to have rather more than a battalion (3/213 Regiment) on the immediate front.

On the 27th companies were changed round, and by 2200 hours the Battalion was disposed with "D" Company (Major D. W. Grove) on Crete West, "C" Company on both Scraggy and Lynch Pimple, Battalion H.Q. on Scraggy, "B" Company on R.A.P. Hill, and "A" Company on Reserve Hill. "D" Company, with its platoons disposed in depth, was still digging and improving damaged defences when an intense artillery concentration from guns of all sizes came down at 0400 hours on the 28th.

Enemy infantry began to work forward, and pressure became intense. Defensive fire was called for on Crete East, where reserves appeared to be assembling. By 0500 hours on the 28th the wire on the eastern side of Crete West had become breached and the forward platoon (No. 18) was then assaulted by wave after wave of the enemy, who penetrated into our forward bunkers. Every man in the four eastern bunkers became a casualty, but all fought on until killed or overpowered. Communication trenches were manned and all attempts by the Japs to extend their penetration were resolutely repulsed. By 0515 hours casualties in the Company were heavy, though all the wounded who could stand were still manning their positions. As visibility improved, Jap snipers became increasingly active and paid special attention to anyone giving orders or directing operations.

The situation was critical and, in order to hit back before the enemy could consolidate or exploit, Major Grove decided to bring up his third platoon (No. 16) from its position in rear for an immediate counter-attack. The Guerilla Platoon was also ordered up from Scraggy to provide a fresh reserve.

At 0545 hours (first light) Jemadar Dharmsing Thapa formed up No. 16 Platoon for an assault over the open, as all the communication trenches were blocked. As they charged forward, with yells of defiance, they were met by M.M.G. fire from Crete East, and by L.M.G. fire and showers of grenades from their objectives. Storming after their own grenades into the first two bunkers, they quickly cleared them, but the enemy hit back viciously from the flanks and the last two bunkers ahead.

Jemadar Dharmsing quickly re-formed his platoon and gave the order to draw kukris. With blood-curdling yells the men rushed the bunkers, and soon not a Jap remained alive inside the position. Outside the bunkers to the east about twenty Japs still lay in groups, covering the flanks, but at the sight of No. 16 Platoon charging over the top with bloody kukris in hand they fled in panic. But they were not quick enough for one fleet-footed Gurkha, who caught up with one carrying a light automatic, took a running slash at him, and seized the gun in triumph. The rest cast away everything they carried, to give added speed to their flight.

Bren gunners then took a hand and dropped a further dozen before the survivors reached the cover of trees south of the ridge. By 0645 hours the position had been regained and the enemy driven off by this highly successful counter-attack, which had greatly heartened the Company. Its success can be judged by the fact that the Japs removed none of our arms or equipment from the bunkers they had captured, while they left us in possession of a light automatic and many rifles. Jemadar Dharmsing received the M.C. for his gallant leading in this action.

At this juncture artillery and mortars took on the fleeing enemy, but unfortunately two medium shells fell in our forward line, and No. 16 Platoon suffered several casualties. Shortly afterwards enemy artillery and mortar fire opened up on our position, but the relief from direct pressure was very welcome and was put to good use. The Guerilla Platoon arrived and was used to clear firing positions and hold the forward posts. Part of No. 16 Platoon was sent back to its old position, and the other two platoons were regrouped. The enemy put in two further attacks with artillery support, but both were easily repulsed with further losses to the attackers.

Our casualties were:

“ D ” Company, 7 killed and 33 wounded; Guerilla Platoon, 1 killed; H.Q. Company, 1 wounded.

In view of the heavy casualties, "A" Company (Major J. E. Heelis) was brought up to relieve "D" Company. Colonel Wingfield also came up to congratulate a somewhat weary but jubilant company. Casualties were then investigated and found to include all platoon commanders and nearly all section commanders in "D" Company. Many of these had been wounded in the early shelling, and after applications of dressings had fought on until the battle was over. "A" Company completed the relief by 1030 hours, when all the wounded had been evacuated and the position re-stocked.

The enemy losses were: 52 bodies in and around the position and 30 stretcher cases seen to be carried away to Cyprus during a mutual cease-fire while both sides cleared up—the first example of Japanese chivalry. Actual enemy losses must have been much higher, as no search could be made in the exposed direction of Crete East. Again Jap small-arms fire caused very few casualties, and grenades were mostly responsible during the infantry attacks, and artillery and mortars at other times.

Colonel Wingfield summed up: "We were amply rewarded for the sweat of four and a half days' digging and roofing by the saving of casualties. All arms took their toll of the enemy, but the Japs' dislike of the kukri was most noticeable. The enemy's defeat was partly due to the good protection we had against shell fire, but above all to the Gurkhas' superiority in hand-to-hand fighting."

"A" Company continued to hold Crete West until the Battalion was relieved by the 1st Devons on 1st May. The strain on Crete West had been terrific, and few got any rest from the constant shelling and the nightly alarms of probing patrols often verging on set-piece attacks. Due to the short range of the enemy guns (two were on Crete East) it was never found possible to get a counter-battery reply until after at least a hundred rounds had fallen in our position. One day two medium tanks lumbered up the road and shot up the cook-house, but they made off hurriedly when tank-busting Hurricane aircraft appeared.

Almost worn out from the long strain and the lack of sleep, the Battalion went back to its old reserve positions on Gibraltar, Malta and Recce Hills for a short rest until 8th May.

LYNCH PIMPLE: 9TH/10TH MAY, 1944

(Map 19, page 205)

While the Battalion was in reserve from 2nd to 8th May the enemy made no major attacks but continued active patrolling and

probing of the forward defences. They were quick to discover that Lynch Pimple was only lightly held (by one platoon) and that its capture would isolate Crete West. On the night 7th/8th May they swept over Lynch Pimple in one rush, and three counter-attacks by the Devons failed to dislodge them.

The 3rd Battalion was then called on to relieve the Devons, retake Lynch Pimple and extricate the isolated Crete West company. After a reconnaissance on the morning of 9th May the Commanding Officer decided to attack Lynch Pimple in the light of a full moon that night. During the day the Battalion moved forward and was disposed with "C" Company and Battalion H.Q. on Scraggy, and "B" and "D" companies on R.A.P. and Reserve Hills. "A" Company (Major J. E. Heelis) was held as the striking force which was to move from Reserve Hill through the jungle on the lower northern slopes and attack Lynch Pimple from the left (northern flank) while "D" Company made a diversion on the right. All the Battalion supporting arms were to be employed, and the Gunners were to soften up the objective with a continuous bombardment from 1000–2230 hours, ending with a salvo to indicate start time. "C" Company (Major M. Latham) was to be ready to take over Crete West, and "D" Company was to consolidate on Lynch Pimple.

"A" Company duly moved off by 2000 hours and soon found the going more difficult than had been expected on the steep rocky and tree-clad slopes. As the column struggled along, line after line of Japanese could clearly be seen silhouetted against the sky-line, making their way on to Lynch Pimple. It was an unfortunate fact, verified from captured documents later, that the Japanese chose to reinforce Lynch Pimple with a complete company an hour before the attack. At 2230 hours "D" Company started its feint attack and drew considerable enemy fire.

"A" Company was delayed but quickly overran North Pimple, and at 0025 hours began its main assault. The men charged up the spur, yelling madly, and above the voices of all the others that of C.H.M. Tulbahadur Gurung (later awarded a M.M.) could be heard (as far as Scraggy) shouting "Kill—kill—kill!" But suddenly they ran into shower after shower of grenades on the steep final slope where our bombardment had levelled the trenches and left no vestige of cover. The Company suffered heavily. Major Heelis and Jemadar Parbir Pun were seriously wounded and most of the senior N.C.Os. were laid low, with a score of others, in a few minutes. Many of them were blown off

their feet to topple backwards and roll heavily down the scree, and still the grenades showered down. Jemadar Balbahadar Gurung took some time to sort out the situation, but finding himself senior survivor, set about rallying the rest out of grenade range and collecting the casualties, which numbered seven killed and thirty wounded. Hearing of the Company's plight at 0130 by wireless, the Commanding Officer sent Major D. W. Grove, with part of " D " Company, to the rescue, and the survivors and casualties were brought back by dawn.

During " A " Company's attack, " C " Company had also advanced towards Lynch Pimple from the south, but was eventually held up by heavy fire and took up a position to pin the enemy down and help the main attack. It was now ordered back to strengthen Scraggy against a likely counter-attack. The Devons' Company on Crete West was then told to slip away before daylight as its position would be untenable. It reported back at 0700 hours with two casualties. Our casualties, other than those in " A " Company, were: " C " Company, 2 killed and 23 wounded; H.Q. Company, 1 wounded.

It was a disappointing operation, but the fates were unkind. The Japanese had reinforced at the eleventh hour and were on the alert. Scraggy was now in the forefront of the battle.

SCRAGGY : 10TH AND 11TH MAY

(Map 19, and see Plate 7)

During the morning of the 10th the Battalion was re-disposed as follows:

On Scraggy: " B " Company (Major J. Darby) with one platoon " D " Company and part of H.Q. Company; 231 (Mortar) Battery, R.I.A.; Battalion Command Post.

On R.A.P. Hill: " D " Company less one platoon.

On Reserve Hill: " C " Company and Mortar Platoon.

Behind Reserve Hill: " A " Company, reduced by casualties to half strength.

Companies dug hard all day and by dusk had completed pits and crawl trenches. There were reports of enemy M.T. moves behind Cyprus and Crete East during the day, but no other signs of activity. The night was quiet at first and no movement could be seen or heard, even on Lynch Pimple.

But from 2000 hours onwards the Battalion had to stand-to and remain manning its defences in face of mounting enemy activity with discharger grenades and M.M.Gs. At midnight an artillery concentration came down on " B " Company's forward positions and three medium tanks opened fire with 47-mm. guns from Crete West. Thirty minutes later the first of a series of attacks fell on " B " Company. Waves of Japs continued to surge in, regardless of casualties, and eventually climbed over the dead bodies draping the wire to overwhelm the forward platoon, which had by then run out of grenades and ammunition.

Some of the survivors managed to join posts holding out on the rearward flanks, but soon the enemy exploited his success in the centre, and " B " Company was forced back to a line only twenty yards in front of the Command Post.

The Commanding Officer summoned Major D. W. Grove to bring up one of the " D " Company platoons while the Adjutant, Captain J. K. Jacomb-Hood, went back to collect " A " Company. The 2nd-in-Command, Major J. L. Goldney, was also sent back to warn Captain C. U. Blascheck, of H.Q. Company, that he would lead " A " Company in a counter-attack. Major Goldney was mortally wounded by a sniper on his way back, but gallantly delivered his message before he died in the R.A.P.

The rear area was under heavy shell and mortar fire, and soon after 0100 hours (11th) the Battalion suffered another sad loss when Major M. Latham was killed instantly by a shell burst.

Major J. Darby and Subedar Ramsaran Pun meanwhile managed to stabilize the front along a crawl trench and the remnants of " B " Company stood firm with the arrival of more ammunition which Captains L. C. Dean and E. B. Naug (M.O.) brought up in relays of carrying parties. Major Grove and his platoon reported at 0200 hours, but " A " Company was then struggling through the heavily shelled rear areas. The situation was critical during the next forty-five minutes. Two determined attacks on the left flank, and a third towards the Command Post in the centre, were thrown back in turn. The Commanding Officer himself was here, there and everywhere, first personally directing a 2-inch mortar to knock out an M.M.G. with the second round, then joining a threatened forward post to man a rifle or to hurl grenades.

As " A " Company, formed in two platoons under Jemadar Balbahadur Gurung, arrived at 0230 hours, it was evident that the enemy was also engaging " C " Company in rear and shelling all

the Battalion positions. Colonel Wingfield started giving out new orders, but these were frequently interrupted by all British officers having to rush out to help the much diminished platoon just in front. In the new plan, one "A" Company platoon was to thicken up the H.Q. Company front on the left (where there were no automatics); the "D" Company platoon was to attack through H.Q.; "B" Company in the centre towards its old positions; and the second platoon of "A" on the right.

Orders were to take as many of the old positions as could be consolidated in turn. "D" Company made some progress but was then checked in front of two strongly held bunkers.

"B" Company lost heavily as soon as it started but gained some ground before it was again pinned down in front of the Command Post. "A" Company, led by Captain Blascheck, gallantly stormed three bunkers and halted to consolidate them in view of fresh heavy casualties. A wounded Jap was found in one bunker, and the four survivors of the platoon here mounted guard over him. When stretcher-bearers came up to remove the prisoner, only one Gurkha was left alive, and he too was then killed by a shell.

It was now 0400 hours, casualties had mounted seriously, and the wounded were calling piteously for help which could not be given, both dressings and morphia having run out.

The Commanding Officer decided to ask Brigade for another company to relieve "C" Company and free the latter for the forward area. This done, he and the other officers went out to the forward posts to help man them and service jammed automatic weapons. Demands were sent back for more ammunition, and soon it appeared with the indefatigable Captain L. C. Dean and Captain E. B. Naug. British officers helping to man the forward posts included Colonel Wingfield, Major Darby, Major Grove, Captain Blascheck and Lieutenants J. Murray and J. Twells. The Commanding Officer remained outwardly calm and cheerful, telling the wounded how proud he was of the way they had all fought, and in general showing a magnificent example of courage and confidence.

At 0417 hours another Japanese attack developed, and the situation looked desperate and called for desperate methods. The Commanding Officer boldly asked the 25-pounder artillery to put down a regimental concentration, scale 2, on his own position. In two minutes it came down, well placed in the middle of the position. Our own troops miraculously suffered

few casualties in the cover of slit trenches, though Colonel Wingfield, Major Grove, Captain Blascheck and Lieutenant Twells were all hit but carried on. The enemy, however, suffered heavily and were either blown off or dispersed to a safer distance.

For the moment the situation was saved, but the Gunners were most relieved to get the Colonel's message of reassurance and thanks.

At 0445 hours everyone was thankful to see a company of the 2nd Borders moving up, full of cheer and confidence, shouting greetings to "Johnny Gurkha." They arrived just in time, when the Brigade wireless set was being sent back against the probability of an early evacuation. Two Border platoons at once took over the whole of the forward positions from "B" and "A" Companies, and a third platoon was kept in hand.

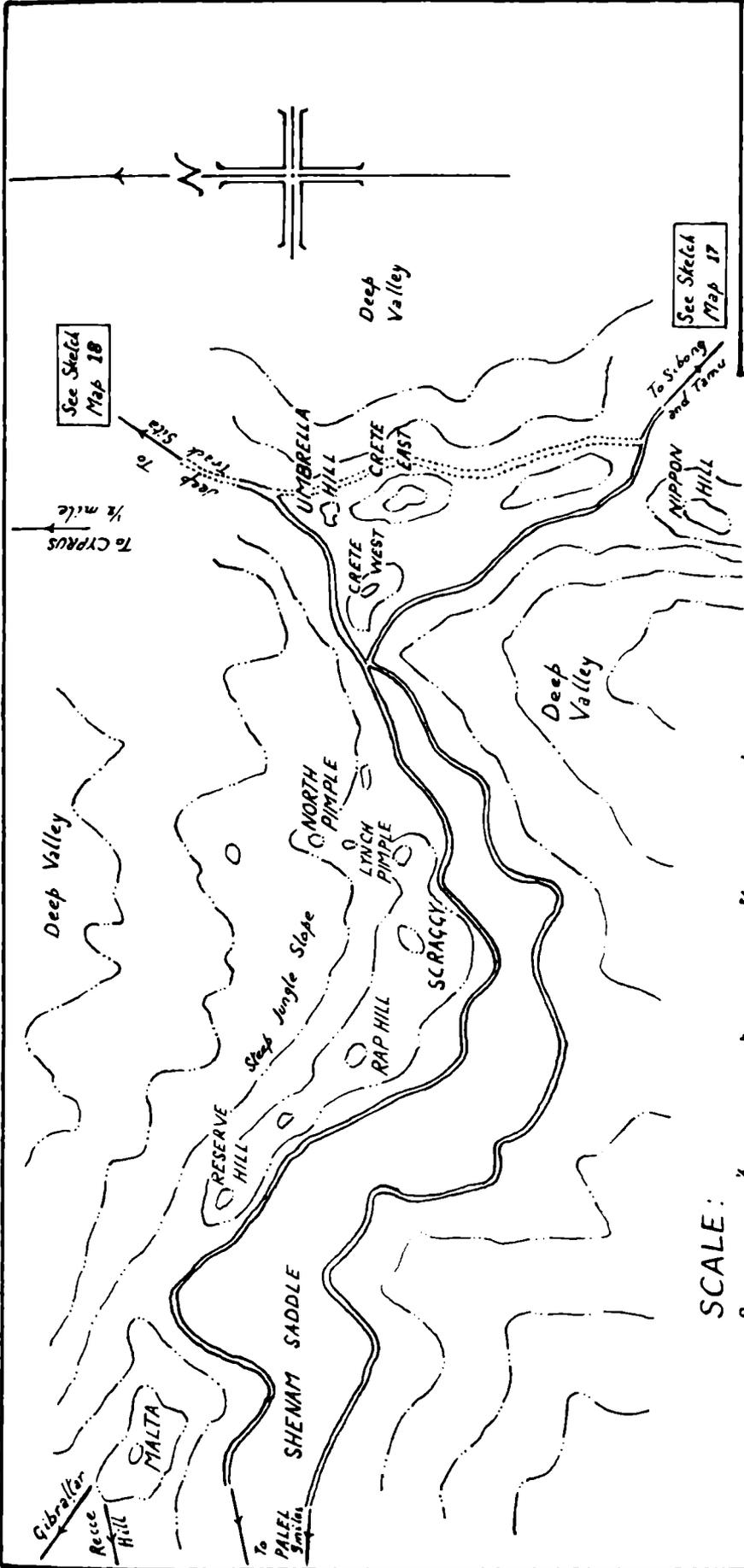
The forward platoons soon came under heavy artillery fire, and one lost half its strength in casualties, but the front stood firm. At about 0600 hours Brigade H.Q. sent orders that the whole Border Regiment would come up to relieve the Battalion at 0800 hours. The Commanding Officer was determined, however, that he would not hand over until one more effort had been made. The enemy must have lost heavily too, and there was still a chance of retaking the position by using the still-fresh Guerilla Platoon.

Jemadar Karbir Thapa brought his men up, and at 0730 hours, after a short artillery barrage, his attack went in. Jemadar Karbir was seen to be the first into a bunker with drawn kukri, but showers of Japanese grenades gave the guerillas no chance to close in. Seeing that the situation was hopeless, the Commanding Officer gave orders for the Platoon to withdraw. Jemadar Karbir was never seen again (and was later presumed killed), but his gallant action remains vividly in the memory of all who saw him that day. Alas! It was also the swan-song of the Guerilla Platoon, the remnant of which had to be broken up to reinforce the sadly depleted companies.

By 0830 hours (11th May) the Battalion had been relieved by the 2nd Borders and was on its way back to its old reserve areas. The losses had been grievous and ground had been lost but everyone had fought magnificently, from Commanding Officer to rifleman. Our casualties were over 100, made up of:

Killed or died of wounds: 2 B.Os., Majors J. L. Goldney and M. Latham, 14 G.O.Rs.

SKETCH MAP 19 SHENAM SADDLE



Wounded: 4 B.Os., Colonel Wingfield, Major D. W. Grove, Captain C. U. Blascheck and Lieutenant J. Twells; 3 G.Os. and 67 G.O.Rs.

Missing, presumed killed: 1 G.O. and 9 G.O.Rs.

On the enemy's side the casualties could not be estimated at the time though hundreds of bodies littered the whole position. A Japanese diary, captured after the 23rd Division took over on Shenam, proved that the enemy had paid a heavy price with the loss of one colonel, two majors and 800 men killed.

All our dead were taken back to Palel for burial. The wounded were quickly removed by men of the American Field Service (a volunteer ambulance organization), who all did magnificent work. They cheerfully insisted on coming forward time and again, far beyond their true beat, in and out of the heavily shelled area, to speed up evacuation. They drove through the Japanese attacks and heavy shelling around Malta with their lights blazing, and hooting defiantly. They will not be forgotten by the 3rd Battalion, with whom they became fast friends. It was often difficult to deter them from seizing rifles and joining in the battle. Captain Naug did fine work at the R.A.P. and frequently went up to the front to pilot ammunition parties and to make sure of the wounded being collected. It was one of the notable features of the battles round Imphal that casualties throughout could usually be rushed from the R.A.P. or A.D.S. to a near-by airfield and thence flown out immediately to Bengal. It was a great comfort for all to know that if wounded they would, often within forty-eight hours, be in the clean comfort of big base hospitals under the skilled care of doctors and nurses.

There is no doubt that the enemy had carried out a highly organized and skilfully conducted attack. He was not content to hammer at the forward defences but also did all he could to pin down the rear companies by carefully timed diversionary attacks and heavy shelling. Approaches from the rear were all swept by artillery and M.M.Gs. to hamper the moves of reinforcements. An infantry attack was also staged as far back as Malta to interfere with major reinforcements.

Despite their own threatened positions, Major Goldney and Major Latham both personally organized covering fire from all weapons available to give the maximum help to the defenders of Scraggy, until they fell in turn. Their efforts may well have been decisive when success or failure hung by a thread.

Summing up in his report, Colonel Wingfield said: "Once again the Gurkhas showed their qualities of courage and tenacity. It was only due to the fact that the enemy was numerically superior and to the fact that he cleverly pinned down the whole Battalion, that the forward trenches were relinquished. The enemy had employed an extremely complicated plan, but he had taken great care in giving his orders to what must have been very highly trained troops."

That was the end of the Shenam battles as far as the 3rd Battalion was concerned, but a fierce ebb and flow of fighting went on along the same battle-scarred heights until the Japs were finally broken and driven off at the end of July.

The awards for the recent fighting, in addition to those already mentioned, were: D.S.Os.—Lieutenant-Colonel C. M. H. Wingfield, M.V.O., and Major D. W. Grove; I.O.M.—Subedar Ramsaran Pun; three I.D.S.Ms., and four M.Ms.

On 17th and 18th May the 37th Brigade of 23rd Division came forward to relieve the 80th Brigade. The 3rd Battalion moved back on the 17th to Kameng, ten miles north-east of Imphal along the Ukhrul road, but not to rest and not for long. It had ten days of hard digging on defensive positions north of Kameng, but there were no Japs about and no battle noises to disturb the men's arrears of sleep. They were also pleased to find themselves near the 153rd (Gurkha) Parachute Battalion, which included some of the original 3rd Battalion officers and men.

WITH THE 17TH INDIAN DIVISION

(Map 20, page 211)

The next call for action came on 26th May. General D. T. Cowan, the 17th Divisional Commander, asked for the loan of a battalion to help deal with a Japanese force which had established itself on Red Hill, close to his H.Q. harbour on the Bishenpur road. The choice fell on 3/1st, and late on the 27th it reached the harbour, which was almost an island in the flooded paddy fields. There it joined Woodforce, under Brigadier Woods, which included 1/4th G.R. and 7/10th Baluch in addition to Gunners and the 7th Light Cavalry (Stuart tanks).

While the Battalion was moving in, the enemy position on Red Hill was being engaged by 1/4th G.R., but early next morning it was learnt that the Japanese still held the area ringed on Map. 20, including the western end of Red Hill itself.

Colonel Wingfield received orders for the Battalion to attack early that afternoon, 28th May, and issued warning orders. " B " Company (Major J. Darby) was to lead and clear Red Hill and Pimple 1; " D " Company (Lieutenant D. M. Plenderlieth) was then to capture Pimple 2. All the objectives were to be consolidated. After reconnaissances, necessarily limited, the details were filled in and orders issued at midday.

The Gunners were to put down a half-hour concentration (25-pounders and mortars) lifting at 1535 hours—five minutes after " B " Company's start. Two troops of the 7th Light Cavalry were to give supporting fire from the left flank, and one tank was to move over the top of Red Hill to give close support and take on a 75-mm. gun known to be in position there. This sounded, and proved to be, suicidal, but the tank commander gallantly insisted on doing so, whatever the cost. It was the first example of the self-sacrificing spirit shown by this Regiment, then and later, when co-operating with the Battalion, and it was greatly appreciated. The Battalion H.Q. Control Post, with the Commanding Officer, Adjutant (Captain J. K. Jacomb-Hood) and Intelligence Officer (Lieutenant J. Murray) was to be established on Red Hill.

" B " Company's attack along the top of Red Hill started well. It was checked for a while by a bunker on its right, but C.H.M. (later Jemadar and I.D.S.M.) Chitrabhadur Thapa dashed in and mopped up all the occupants himself. The advance continued but was slowed down by stiffening opposition. The 7th Cavalry tank came gallantly forward, on the top of the hill, to give effective support, but inevitably it was soon knocked out. The attack faltered as casualties mounted. Many N.C.Os. were hit, and then Major J. Darby was killed in a valiant effort to get on; and the Company was forced to the ground.

Seeing what had happened, Colonel Wingfield dashed forward himself and galvanized everyone into aggressive action. Hurling grenades himself, leading one rush after another, he carried " B " Company forward in a charge which swept over the last Jap-held portion of the hill. " B " Company's first objective was taken but at a tragic cost to the Battalion. Colonel Wingfield had fallen while leading the charge, killed by a sniper's bullet in the head. His loss was deeply felt by every officer and man in the Battalion, which he had raised, trained, and so gallantly led.

But the battle went on. " B " Company re-formed and went for Pimple 1, where a fierce hand-to-hand struggle developed on the summit. Seeing this, Lieutenant Plenderlieth took " D "

Company up to complete the capture, then doubled his company forward to take Pimple 2. He was quickly hit in the leg, but gallantly ignoring his painful wound he led the Company on again, only to be killed as the assault was held up a few yards from the summit.

Near the Command Post another tragedy had occurred. Captain Jacomb-Hood, now left in control, was hit in the stomach by a sniper while going forward to reconnoitre. He got back painfully to report to the Brigadier before he fainted, and was then evacuated, only to die next day. In the meantime the enemy had strongly counter-attacked from the west of Red Hill, and "B" Company, with its ammunition spent, was gradually forced back. Heavy shelling on both Pimples then preceded another attack which re-took Pimple 1 and part of Red Hill.

Seeing this grave turn of events from near the Command Post, the Brigade Commander gave orders for "D" Company to join "B" and for both to recapture Pimple 1. Subedar Bhadrabir Rana, though wounded himself, took command of both forward companies and rallied them for a further effort. No more ammunition had come forward, however, and little progress could be made. The carriers had started forward from camp but had been bogged in the paddy fields. "A" Company, with H.Q. details, including followers, were hastily organized as carrying parties and sent off to Red Hill under Subedar Amarjang Gurung. They arrived in time for renewed Japanese attacks to be held, but Subedar Bhadrabir reported that he could not re-take Pimple 1 or the lost ground on Red Hill. An attack on Pimple 1 had been halted only ten yards from the top by lack of ammunition. What had arrived had been expended and when no more had appeared by 1745 hours the Brigade Commander ordered Lieutenant J. Murray to withdraw the Battalion back to camp, as there would be no time to consolidate before dark.

Lieutenant Murray, ably supported by Subedar Bhadrabir, had been striving to restore the situation, but with ammunition running out faster than it could be brought up, it was as much as they could do to stabilize the front. Disengaging the remnants of the two companies from close contact was a ticklish task, but it was boldly and skilfully executed by Lieutenant Murray and the Gurkha officers without any further losses.

When the Battalion got back after dark the Brigadier paid a visit to thank the officers and men for all they had done—and to authorize a tot of rum all round. Seldom had a tot been more

welcome. The men were despondent at the loss of their beloved Colonel Sahib and many other close friends, but Subedar-Major Tilakbir Thapa was magnificent, going round cheering everyone up and helping to restore the men's usual buoyant spirits.

The casualties had amounted to 19 killed or died of wounds (including 4 B.Os. and 1 G.O.) and 55 wounded, reducing the Battalion strength to about 400 only.

The Battalion report on the action concludes:

“Once again the enemy demonstrated the great value of grenades. This time, too, he had highly trained snipers who accounted for the lives of three British Officers, including the Commanding Officer, and mortally wounded the Adjutant. Unfortunately, the delay caused by the check when the company commanders were killed gave time for the enemy to strengthen his positions. If the reserve ammunition had arrived in time, there is no doubt that the objectives would have been taken and consolidated.

“Great credit is due to the effectiveness of the ‘Walkie-Talkies’ (R/T sets) and the coolness of the British operators who kept Brigade H.Q. constantly informed of the situation.

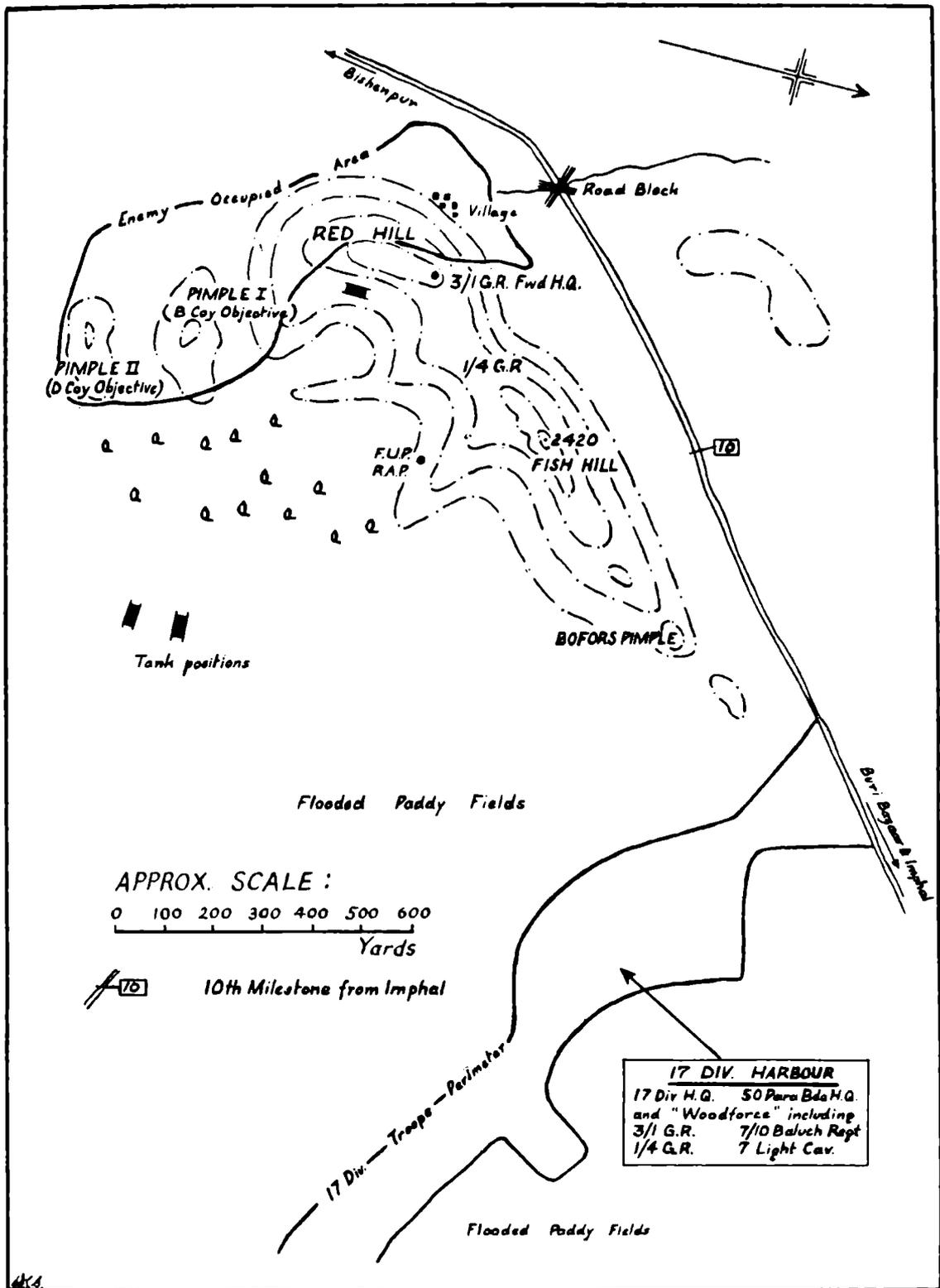
One officer wrote later: “No praise is too high for these operators. They reported the situation accurately every five minutes, even after their B.Os. had been killed. To this day no one knows how they managed to transmit orders from Battalion H.Q. to the Gurkha commanders. Without them the Battalion would have stayed out all night without food, water or ammunition.”

Next day General Cowan came to thank the Battalion and told the officers that it had gained a reputation second to none in IV Corps.

The awards for Red Hill included M.Cs. for Captain J. Murray and Subedar Bhadrabir Rana, two I.D.S.Ms. and two M.Ms.

The Battalion was heartened by messages from all Gurkha battalions near Imphal and by the arrival of officers “on loan” from several of them to fill their depleted cadre. Among the nine who were thus attached for varying periods up to 21st July (listed in a Note to Appendix 3 (D)) was Lieutenant-Colonel E. Eustace, who assumed command for a few days.

Major L. C. Dean was the senior “old soldier” left and he was later gazetted M.B.E. “for prolonged and meritorious services” during the earlier fighting and in the trying times the Battalion now had to face after its heavy casualties. He was soon ably



SKETCH MAP 20

RED HILL AREA

3rd Bn Action on 28 May 1944 (with 17 Ind. Div)

supported by others, who plagued their superiors to get back from temporary "outside jobs," including Captains R. Paine, M. H. Kelleher, G. Trubridge and B. W. Sutherland. Major F. T. G. Morcom also joined in mid-June, and Major J. E. Heelis on 4th July after recovering from his wounds at Lynch Pimple.

During 20th May the 7/10th Baluchis found Red Hill and both the Pimples clear of the enemy. There was no doubt that the Japanese had lost heavily and decided to get out while the going was good. About 100 Japanese bodies were found, and seven unarmed shell-shocked prisoners were taken. One prisoner said that his whole company had been wiped out.

The enemy were now reported to have moved off, leaving about eighty men with some 75-mm. guns entrenched in Irengbam, a village about a mile from Red Hill on the north side of the road.

The Battalion was now given the task of clearing Irengbam next day with the support of Gunner mortars and Stuart tanks, and Captain J. Murray went out with a few men, all of them disguised as Manipuris, to gain valuable information from close quarters. When the leading Company, "A," under Captain G. Trubridge, advanced on the 21st, it drew considerable fire as it approached the village, but the enemy could not face the final charge of yelling Gurkhas and fled in panic. Fugitives trying to make off across the fields were engaged by L.M.Gs. and mortars. Two bewildered prisoners were taken, one a follower found studying a map and wondering, perhaps, where the "March on Delhi" had led him. Our losses were only two slightly wounded.

This was the first time the enemy had given up the fight so tamely, but they were undoubtedly becoming half-starved and demoralized after their repeated heavy losses and their failure to capture our supply dumps.

There was no time to search for bodies, but at least twenty casualties must have been inflicted on the enemy.

After this action the Battalion followed Woodforce round for a few days in sweeps near the Bishenpur road, getting very tired of ploughing through paddy fields and carrying stores across them to form harbours at night. Colonel E. Eustace departed on 1st June after only four days in command, but these included the successful minor action just described, which did much to revive the Battalion's spirits after its sad losses at Red Hill. Lieutenant-Colonel P. B. Keily arrived from 3/9th G.R. to assume command

on 3rd June as the Battalion was about to set off for further operations in the north.

The 20th Division was now preparing to strike at the Japanese L. of C. crossing the Ukhrul hills to the battle area on the road north of Imphal. The 3rd Battalion was therefore recalled to the 80th Brigade camp, about seven miles north-east of Imphal, which was to be the starting-point for a northward thrust up the Iril Valley. There it spent three busy days preparing for the march, which was to start on 7th June.

But we shall defer the tale of these operations until we have caught up with the doings of the 4th Battalion, which had been heavily engaged at Kohima since early May and was also to feature in a later stage of the Ukhrul hunt.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

KOHIMA AND UKHRUL

(Map 21, page 227. See also Plate 6)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

AT the end of Chapter Eleven the 4th Battalion had just flown in from Arakan and concentrated by 17th April, 1944, at Hautley Tea Estate, near Golaghat, about fifty miles north of the railhead and main base for the Central Front at Dimapur (earlier known as Manipur Road).

To understand the next moves we must briefly survey events on the Central Front, and around Kohima in particular. We have seen how the Japanese invasion swept round and encircled Imphal by 30th March, and how the 3rd Battalion battled fiercely in the 20th Division's sector and elsewhere.

Meanwhile, the 31st Japanese Division and part of the 15th also swept northward through the Ukhrul and Somra hills, driving in the British outpost groups and encircling Kohima by 4th April.

The small Kohima garrison of 3,500 men held a gradually contracting perimeter, including six hills at the start and only one at the end, for a siege of sixteen days against the savage assaults of four times their numbers.

To rescue Kohima came first the 161st Brigade of the 5th Division, flown from Arakan. (The other two brigades flew to Imphal.) Advancing from Dimapur on 5th April the leading battalion, 4th Royal West Kents, fought its way in to join the besieged garrison, while the two other battalions became encircled a few miles westwards.

Then came the 2nd British Division from far away in Southern India, with a new XXXIII Corps, to be joined by brigades of the 7th Division in turn, the 33rd leading. The Corps was faced with three main tasks: (1) to relieve the 161st Brigade and the

Kohima garrison; (2) to clear up the whole Kohima area; and (3) to link up with IV Corps at Imphal.

The 2nd Division advanced on Kohima in the second week of April, freed the 161st Brigade, and raised the siege on 19th April. But the Japanese continued to cling tenaciously to every ridge and hillock, and fighting as fierce as any in the whole campaign was to go on for another fifty days.

Enter the 4th Battalion at this stage.

It had been protecting the vast base area around Golaghat and Mariani (twenty-five miles to the east) and patrolling the railway towards Dimapur, between the 17th and 26th April. Then it moved forward, first by rail to Bokajan, then by M.T. to Jotsama, a few miles from Kohima, on the 29th, where it joined the 2nd Division. Emerging from the steamy Brahmaputra Valley, the road from Dimapur climbs a twisting valley in mounting sweeps and curves, to reach the 4,500-foot hill-girt saddle of Kohima itself near the 46th mile.

At the 32nd mile from Dimapur is Zubza Ridge, which marked the limit of the Japanese flood of invasion into India. The day before it reached Jotsama, Lieutenant-Colonel Berthon was evacuated to hospital with recurring dysentery. He did not rejoin, but nine months later was to lead the 1st Battalion into Northern Burma.

Lieutenant-Colonel I. H. Hedderwick took over for what was to be a tragically short command.

On 1st May the Battalion was in position on Twin Tree Hill (near M.S. 42) about two miles from Kohima's western Jap-held ridge. Up to 6th May it was engaged in active patrolling and probing of the enemy's positions, all stubbornly held, and six Japanese were killed in patrol clashes or ambushes.

CLEARING KOHIMA

(Map 21 and Plate 6)

The 33rd Brigade now joined in the 2nd Division's concerted advance to clear the Kohima Hills. On the left flank the 5th Brigade made for Naga village; on the right flank the 4th Brigade assaulted G.P.T. Ridge (named from "General Purposes Transport" which had been located there). In the centre the 161st, 33rd and 6th Brigades came into action in turn on Jail and Garrison Hills.

On 7th May the Queen's (33rd Brigade) staged their first, and

unsuccessful, attack on Jail Hill. Soon after dawn, before the attack started, "D" Company of the 4th Battalion was sent out to mop up a Japanese bunker which lay in front of the 2nd Norfolks (4th Brigade) and constituted an enfilade threat to the advance on Jail Hill. Lieutenant-Colonel I. H. Hedderwick and part of his H.Q. followed "D," which was soon involved in a savage scrap. The bunker in dispute had defied all the Norfolks' efforts and was barely twenty yards from their position. It was almost flush with the hillside and revealed only some very narrow fire slits.

A bazooka barrage was first put down, with little apparent effect; then, under cover of a 2-inch-mortar smoke screen, the Company Commander, Captain R. F. Gibson-Smith, followed closely by his Company Officer, 2nd-Lieutenant C. S. Rae, Havildar Dhankaji Gurung and eight men, charged the position. The enemy immediately threw out showers of grenades, killing Gibson-Smith, who fell almost into the bunker, and wounding Rae close behind. Three Gurkhas were also laid low—one killed and two wounded. This repulse was followed by a concerted pincer move with a strong section on each flank, covered again by bazookas. The War Diary then says:

"As the attack was about to go in, Colonel Hedderwick, who was slightly behind in one of the Norfolks' trenches, stood up, exposing himself to the waist. The brilliant green shirt he was wearing must have attracted the Japs' attention, for he was shot through the chest immediately and died ten minutes later. All this time the pincer attack was going on and both parties closed to within three yards of the bunker. The opposition, however, was too fierce, and the bunker seemingly impervious to any type of fire, so the attack was called off. There were no B.Os. to take command of the Company, and an officer of the 4th Brigade ordered it back to the Battalion."

The second attack cost three killed and six wounded, making the serious toll for this short, sharp action: killed, 2 B.Os. and 4 G.O.Rs.; wounded, 1 B.O. and 8 G.O.Rs. Major H. W. S. Chedburn took over officiating command, which he held from 7th to 12th May.

The main attack of the 1st Queen's took Jail Hill and Pimple, but bunkers on both flanks gave so much trouble that neither hill could be held, and the Queen's had to fall back. The 4th Battalion, apart from the bunker scrap, had been responsible only for establishing a firm base on Twin Tree Hill. Major T. E. May arrived with a welcome reinforcement of 121 men on 8th May.

Planning now started for a major attack on the whole ridge, eventually set for the 11th, and the next few days were spent in reconnaissances and in methodical softening up by artillery and tanks.

In the new plan: 4th Brigade was to clear G.P.T. Ridge on the 10th; 5th Brigade (Royal Berks) was to attack F.S.D. in conjunction with the 33rd Brigade, which was to capture and consolidate the main features of Jail and D.I.S. Hills; 1/1st Punjab was to occupy Pimple during the night before the attack. In 33rd Brigade sector Jail Hill was to be captured by the Queen's and D.I.S. by 4/15th Punjab. H, or hour of attack, was to be 0440 hours on 11th May. The 4th Battalion was to reinforce, consolidate and exploit the gains of the two forward battalions, two companies, " B " and " C," being allotted to the Queen's, and one, " D " Company, to 4/15th. " A " Company was to be held in reserve to await the progress of the attack.

The battle which opened on the 11th was to last for three days of close and savage fighting. The Japs had to be winkled out and exterminated to the last man in a honeycomb of bunkers and foxholes. No quarter was expected or given.

Two companies of the 4th Battalion shared in both the troubles and triumphs of the Queen's, so we shall take part of the story from a report of the O.C. Queen's, and fill it in from the 4th Battalion Newsletter (No. 1).

Having described the general plan and objectives, the Queen's report continues:

" Narrative of events.

" As soon as the artillery concentration lifted, ' C ' and ' D ' Companies crossed the start line and commenced the assault. Opposition was encountered from enemy positions on the summit of Jail Hill, and casualties suffered.

" On reaching the summit, the leading companies were held up by heavy L.M.G. fire, ' C ' from bunker positions on the reverse slope and on their right flank, and ' B ' from three bunker positions immediately above the Jail buildings on their left flank. ' A ' and ' D,' closely following up, were now engaging enemy positions and mopping up posts which had been overrun by the leading companies.

" The enemy posts on D.I.S. and G.P.T. features not being entirely eliminated, all four companies on Jail Hill were now subjected to very heavy L.M.G. fire from both flanks, front and

rear, the entire Jail Hill feature being swept by accurate fire. The casualties were now very considerable (including several officers).”

Then the Newsletter:

“ ‘ B ’ Company (Major M. J. T. McCann) and ‘ C ’ Company (Lieutenant B. A. Beamand) were ordered forward to report to O.C. Queen’s. ‘ C ’ Company moved across the road below Jail Hill at 0800 hours, came under very heavy enemy machine gun fire and suffered six casualties.

“ Lieutenant Beamand proceeded to lead the Company up the hill, where he had been ordered to occupy a sector of the Queen’s perimeter. The Queen’s had gained about one-third of the north-west portion of Jail Hill, but the rest was very strongly held by the enemy, and the positions we were on were very strongly enfladed by enemy M.G. fire. There was no cover whatsoever on the hillside, and any movement was met by a hail of bullets.

“ Lieutenant Beamand had almost reached the sector he was taking over when he was shot through the head. An officer of the Queen’s who saw what had happened attempted to give further orders to Subedar Manlal Ghale who was then in charge of the company. Owing to language difficulties the officer got in touch with our Battalion H.Q. on Twin Tree Hill and the orders were translated to the Subedar by Major Thompson.

“ Major C. J. Nixon was then sent forward to take over command of ‘ C ’ Company. He arrived safely, took over the sector and, linking up with the Queen’s, gained a little ground to the south-east. His great difficulty was to dig in, as any movement was met by heavy M.G. fire. However, a 3-inch-mortar screen was successfully laid, and the Company quickly dug in and joined up with the Queen’s.

“ ‘ B ’ Company passed through ‘ C ’ shortly after 1300 hours and took up a position on the left flank of the Queen’s. It was able to do this without any casualties owing to a very heavy mist which blanketed the entire hill for a while. It also made a local advance along the crest of the ridge. The six companies of the two battalions busily dug themselves in throughout the night. During the whole of this operation heavy rain had fallen, but with the help of ‘ A ’ Company, food, ammunition and rum were got forward.

“ Meanwhile ‘ D ’ Company (Major T. E. May) had gone forward to support the 4/15th, who had suffered heavy casualties on D.I.S. May was ordered to attack that night a bunker which

was holding up the consolidation of the positions captured by the Punjabis. The Company were met by a hail of fire and grenades when they neared the bunker, and May decided to dig in and get further orders. These were to attack again at first light (12th) with the help of a tank. This he did, with great success, killing a number of Japs and later clearing more bunkers."

The Queen's report goes on:

"12th May. A troop of Grant tanks arrived early and engaged the bunker positions on the summit and on the west and south-west slopes of the hill. Several of the enemy were seen to be killed by the tanks' fire, and more were shot by M.Gs. as they tried to get away. When the tanks ceased firing 'B' and 'C' Companies of 4/1st G.R. attacked the bunkers. These attacks were put in with great gallantry and determination. 'C' captured two of the bunkers and surrounded a third, digging in within ten yards of it; 'B' captured two others. Although M.G. fire and sniping had diminished, casualties were still being incurred. By dusk the Jail Hill position was held and firmly consolidated, but the enemy were still holding out in two bunkers.

"13th May. At dawn 'C' Company, 4/1st G.R., cleared the bunker on the summit without difficulty. Throughout the day our patrols were very active and accounted for several enemy snipers. Parties of enemy withdrawing on our flanks were engaged by small-arms and mortar fire and casualties inflicted. By dusk, enemy opposition had ceased, and there was no more sniping. The whole of the feature, from G.P.T. Ridge to Garrison Hill, was in our hands, and firmly consolidated.

"*Results of the action:*

"Considerable casualties, impossible to assess, were inflicted on the enemy, and quantities of equipment were captured.

"*Queen's casualties:*

"Killed: 2 officers, 31 other ranks.

Wounded: 3 officers, 72 other ranks.

"*'B' and 'C' Companies, 4/1st G.R.:*

"Killed: 1 officer (Lieutenant B. A. Beamand), 13 G.O.Rs.

Wounded: 32 G.O.Rs.

[The rest of 4/1st casualties are given later.]

"*Conclusion.*

"When Jail Hill was finally cleared, twenty Jap bunker positions were found. All of these were held when the attack started.

The tenacity of the Japs throughout the battle was quite incredible. In one case they continued firing from a bunker after it had been almost completely destroyed by gun-fire over open sights from tanks.

“ The Jail Hill position was indeed a tough nut to crack. It was cracked by the combined efforts of the British and Gurkha troops detailed for the job. This action proved conclusively the inestimable value of the mutual friendship and spirit of liaison between the two units, which arose and developed in successful co-operation in battle in the Arakan. We are both extremely good for each other's morale.”

So ends the Queen's report.

While the battle was raging on the 12th Lieutenant-Colonel D. G. T. Horsford arrived from 8th G.R. to take over command. He was to lead the Battalion from strength to strength until August, 1945, and to create a magnificent fighting record. He won the first of his two D.S.Os. in the fighting immediately ahead.

The total Battalion casualties for the fighting around Jail Hill from 7th to 13th May were:

Killed: British officers, 3; G.O.Rs., 26.

Wounded: British officers, 1; G.O.Rs., 64.

“ C ” and “ D ” Companies were the biggest losers with 31 and 37 casualties respectively.

After its successful share in the Jail Hill operations, the Battalion was concentrated for two days to prepare for the next round.

Colonel Horsford's Newsletter (No. 2) takes up the story:

“ 15th May. By this date the main features immediately overlooking the western approaches to Kohima were in our hands, and the Battalion was ordered to occupy Treasury Hill and thereby link up with the brigade on our left.

“ Previous patrols from other units reported Treasury Hill to be held in strength by Japs, but no patrol had actually arrived on the hill and no one could remember being shot at from Treasury.

“ It was therefore decided to patrol the area ourselves after dark, and then attempt to infiltrate on to the objective and consolidate before light. ‘ A ’ Company, under Lieutenant R. S. R. Carr, and ‘ D ’ Company, under Major T. E. May, were detailed for this night infiltration. All patrols were back by 2300 hours—two reported no enemy seen in their area; the third reported some Japs actually on Treasury. I should like to mention here the excellent way in which these patrols worked. They reported to

me in my Tactical H.Q. on return and were able to point out the tracks they took and the exact location of the enemy on an air photograph.

“ By 2300 hours ‘ A ’ Company was on its objective, and by 0110 hours (16th) ‘ D ’ Company had arrived on Treasury itself. Both companies consolidated without opposition and by midday on the 16th the whole Battalion was established in the area and had linked up with the Brigade advancing on our left.

“ As soon as the rest of the Battalion arrived on Treasury the Japs started shelling and mortaring us. We had a few casualties, including Major T. E. May, who was hit by a shell while doing a reconnaissance. The men were first class; as soon as the shelling stopped they got straight out of their semi-dug trenches and continued work on the defences.

“ We spent thirteen days on Treasury Hill, where we were raided most nights and shelled every day. We had a few direct hits on the Mess and Command Post, but luckily these did no damage. All companies patrolled every day and laid ambushes at night. Patrol reports and patrol commanders’ deductions were excellent, and during our stay we captured four Jap prisoners.

“ In addition to Major T. E. May, wounded, the casualties on Treasury were: 6 G.O.Rs. killed and 19 G.O.Rs. wounded. Major T. E. May was awarded a M.C. for his gallant leading in the recent fighting.

“ I produce a portion of a letter written by the Commander of the 2nd Division, under whom we were then serving, to Brigadier Loftus-Tottenham:

“ ‘ Since the major battle of 11/13th May the chief burden has fallen on 4/1 G.R. in the successful occupation and the subsequent holding of Treasury. I have been tremendously impressed by the workmanlike way in which this operation was carried out, and in which this Battalion has subsequently consolidated and held its position, particularly with regard to its most vigorous and successful patrolling, which has resulted in the capture of several Japanese prisoners.’ ” (End of Newsletter.)

The Arakan patrolling reputation was being maintained.

It remains to add a homely touch, taken from a British officer’s letter: “ Our Mess on Treasury caused great interest to all visitors, as it was almost completely underground. When Chris (C. J.) Nixon’s piano had been installed, even the rain—which had a bad habit of pouring in through the earth roof—could not take away the look of luxury and splendour which the piano gave

the Mess. A private of the Queen's called 'Freshwater,' who every morning delivered water to us, took refuge in the Mess when shelling started one morning. His remark in Cockney when he heard an officer start playing, confirmed our own feeling of uplift: 'Cor blimey, I'm in 'eaven.' "

The same account conveys a less heavenly atmosphere on an occasion when Lieutenant R. P. N. Green's persistent efforts to harass the Japs with roving mortars brought quick retaliatory fire on the Mess roof and severely damaged the precious piano. This piano had been skilfully "acquired" by Major C. J. Nixon from a neighbouring hut, in full view of the Japs, and it certainly lent tone to the scene of savage destruction all around. Kohima at this time has been described as a heap of ruins and ashes, with the debris of desperate battles littered everywhere. (*See Plate 6.*)

THE GUN SPUR OPERATION

The account of the Battalion's next operation, on Gun Spur, has been adapted from Colonel Horsford's special report, which was later published in India as a model of such an operation. (Battle Bulletin No. 6.)

Two frontal attacks against the very strong Japanese-defended Naga village heights overlooking Kohima had failed, and it was then decided to attempt to infiltrate on to Gun Spur. This feature consists of two hills, Basha and Nose, both behind and below the main Jap position. From Gun Spur fire could be brought down on the reverse slopes of Church and Hunters, which were the two Jap strong-points, and patrols and ambushes could operate against the Jap L. of C.

It was therefore decided to find a weak spot in the Jap defences on Gun Spur and to infiltrate a force by night strong enough to hold a firm base and resist any counter-attacks until the whole Battalion could consolidate there next day. The Battalion was allowed three days and three nights in which to explore the approaches and find the weak spot prior to putting this plan into effect. Patrols of two men, one N.C.O. and one picked rifleman, were sent out each night. Their task in each case was to report whether Basha, Nose and an intermediate feature, False Crest, were held by the Japs or not. If they were held, then the patrols were to probe right into their defences and to report the strength of the enemy and the nature of their defences.

False Crest was a small feature astride the road (Jessami track)

and was to form the first bound during the infiltration. These patrols left Treasury just after dark and were ordered to leave their objectives one hour before first light so as to be clear of the Japs before light, and thereby not arouse Jap suspicions of our "interest."

The first patrols found False Crest and Nose clear. They then moved along the Jessami track and found a road-block and several bunkers 100 yards east of False Crest, and another on the west nearer Kohima. Basha was found to be strongly defended by a series of bunker positions estimated to be held by thirty Japs. A patrol to Ring reported this also held by thirty Japs, well dug in. The whole plan depended on these patrols, and they worked magnificently: they produced very accurate information indeed and pin-pointed many Jap positions.

A tentative plan was then drawn up and patrols detailed for the same features the following night. Companies were allotted for various objectives and found the patrols on their fronts.

Briefing and cross-examination were simplified on this occasion by the fact that all objectives could be seen from Treasury, and routes and enemy positions, etc., could be pointed out by means of a pointer staff.

On the second night patrols reported exactly the same as before, except that the Jap strength on Basha had increased to forty. It now seemed fairly certain that the Japs were not on False Crest or Nose but held both Basha and Ring in strength. During the last night, therefore, patrols again checked up and remained watching until after daylight from concealed positions with a good get-away.

The plan now emerged: one company ("C") to lead off and seize and hold False Crest, with patrols to Nose to make sure it had not been occupied; the second company ("A") to pass through to Nose. When both these were established, well before first light, a third company ("B") was to attack Basha, with artillery and tank support, soon after first light.

At 1945 hours on the 25th, Major C. J. Nixon led "C" up to False Crest and reported himself, by wireless whisper, "in position and consolidating; no Japs around." At 2200 hours Captain R. S. R. Carr led "A" Company off and reported Nose occupied by 0400 hours. Each company had practised a special battle drill for the approach and occupation, so that the minimum numbers would be exposed if the Japs were found in position. The approach lay down a steep hillside, along a stony nullah and

then up a very steep hill for 500 feet. Carrying parties were allotted to both companies, thirty from H.Q. to "C," and a Pioneer Company, with a platoon from another company as escort, to "A" for humping consolidation tools, wire and ammunition.

At first light on the 26th Major M. J. T. McCann took "B" Company forward from Treasury to form up on Nose, ready to attack Basha. Just before the Company arrived at Nose, patrols reported Basha strongly held by about forty Japs in bunkers.

The supporting plan included a twenty-minute concentration from mediums, 25-pounders, 3.7 howitzers and tanks. At H-1 the mediums and howitzers switched and the Company advanced to within fifty yards of the 25-pounder barrage. The tanks started by firing super-quick H.E. to clear the jungle, and at H switched to A.P. (armour-piercing): as the Company closed, the tanks were to change to Brownings and fire overhead to keep the enemy's heads down.

As the attack went in the tanks continued firing A.P. only ten yards in front of the troops, the leading flank men of the Company wearing white towels on their backs to indicate their positions to the tank commanders. There was a cloud-burst as the attack started and the Commanding Officer, not being able to see the white towels, thought the Company was late, and ordered the tanks to fire for another five minutes. In actual fact the Company had started on time and the A.P. shells were landing barely ten yards in front of the leading troops, with the result that many of the Japs were still crouching in their trenches when the attack arrived. Twenty Japs were killed and burned, most of them being bayoneted or grenaded while cowering in their holes. A further twenty were probably killed and twenty got away, making a total of sixty.

The Company was then held up by six bunkers—all inter-supporting—on the top of Basha, and proceeded to dig in below the crest before tackling the bunkers. The casualties so far had been: none killed and twelve wounded, mostly only slightly.

By this time the rest of the Battalion, less mules and M.T., etc., were on their way up to Gun Spur. Defences were "tied in," defensive tasks registered and Battalion weapon tasks co-ordinated. For the rest of the day the men worked hard on the defences. Japanese harassing fire by mortars, discharger grenades and M.M.Gs. went on for two days and nights. It was unpleasantly accurate and allowed little move by day or sleep by night.

The enemy put in three counter-attacks during the first night but did not succeed in dislodging anyone. (End of Report.)

Consolidation having proceeded well during the first three days (26th to 28th) the next three (29th to 31st) were mainly devoted to bunker-busting and raiding. In all sixteen bunkers were knocked out by various methods—by pole charges, flame-throwers, and by the tanks working with the Battalion. The flame-throwers were new to the Battalion and they proved to be dangerous toys to play with. Two lifebuoy-type throwers were brought up to rear H.Q. on Treasury Hill one night, and Captain R. P. N. Green was quickly shown how to use them, in the pitch dark, entirely by touch. He taught four men all he knew and then boldly sallied forth to tackle bunkers on Gun Spur.

He was detailed to work with "B" Company in clearing a difficult bunker area on 30th May. The party went forward with one rifle section while the tanks fired A.P. shells at the selected bunker only twenty yards away. The first lifebuoy failed to work, so Green waved the two men back and went on himself, with his No. 2. His lifebuoy refused to ignite and would only spurt liquid, so both Green and his No. 2 made desperate efforts to light the fuel with matches, crouching as low as they could in a hail of bullets. At last a flame appeared and two spurts were applied to a bunker slit only ten yards away. As soon as the enemy on the left saw this they opened fire with M.Gs. The No. 2 got ten bullets through the chest, and Green heard the bullets working up from the No. 2 to him in the few seconds before he took three bullets in the leg himself. He managed to roll away from the flame-thrower, which might have exploded if hit, but lay helpless in the open.

His fate was only a matter of minutes when Subedar Narjang Ghale dashed out from behind, tied up his wounds and carried him back across the open for nearly a hundred yards under heavy fire. Bullets showered them with splinters from trees and covered them with dirt, but Narjang managed to reach the lip of a bomb crater into which they both rolled. For this gallant action Subedar Narjang was awarded a Military Cross—but the flame-throwers were not used again.

By this time the rest of the 7th Division had come into action for this final phase of pushing the Japs off Church Hill and Naga village, the last heights overlooking Kohima. There were a few more days of scrapping on Gun Spur and on 1st June came what Colonel Horsford calls "the highlight of the whole

operation," a platoon raid by Jemadar Patiram Gurung, of " C " Company, on Ring. The Commanding Officer's report reads:

" Ring was a small jungle-covered feature held by thirty Japs in dug-in positions. It was also suspected that there was a 75-mm. gun there. A platoon raid was arranged and the commander was told that the object was to kill Japs—NOT to capture the position. If he met with very great opposition, he was to withdraw after killing as many Japs as possible.

" The raid was preceded by a ten-minute shoot by one tank firing super-quick H.E. with the object of clearing some of the jungle.

" Jemadar Patiram led his platoon along the side of the feature and formed up just below the hill itself, skilfully avoiding a nullah lower down—a very obvious F.U.P. (forming up position)—on which the Japs soon brought down very heavy mortar defensive fire.

" The platoon then advanced to raid the position and, as soon as the first two sections started blitzing, a Jap M.M.G. opened up from a bunker on a flank.

" Patiram stalked this himself, threw two grenades inside, killed the four Japs in the bunker, and knocked out the M.M.G. The platoon continued blitzing its way through the position and finally came upon the 75-mm. gun, manned by four Japs. Led by the Platoon Commander a section rushed this gun, killed the four Japs with their kukris, and then threw five grenades down the barrel of the gun to render it unserviceable.

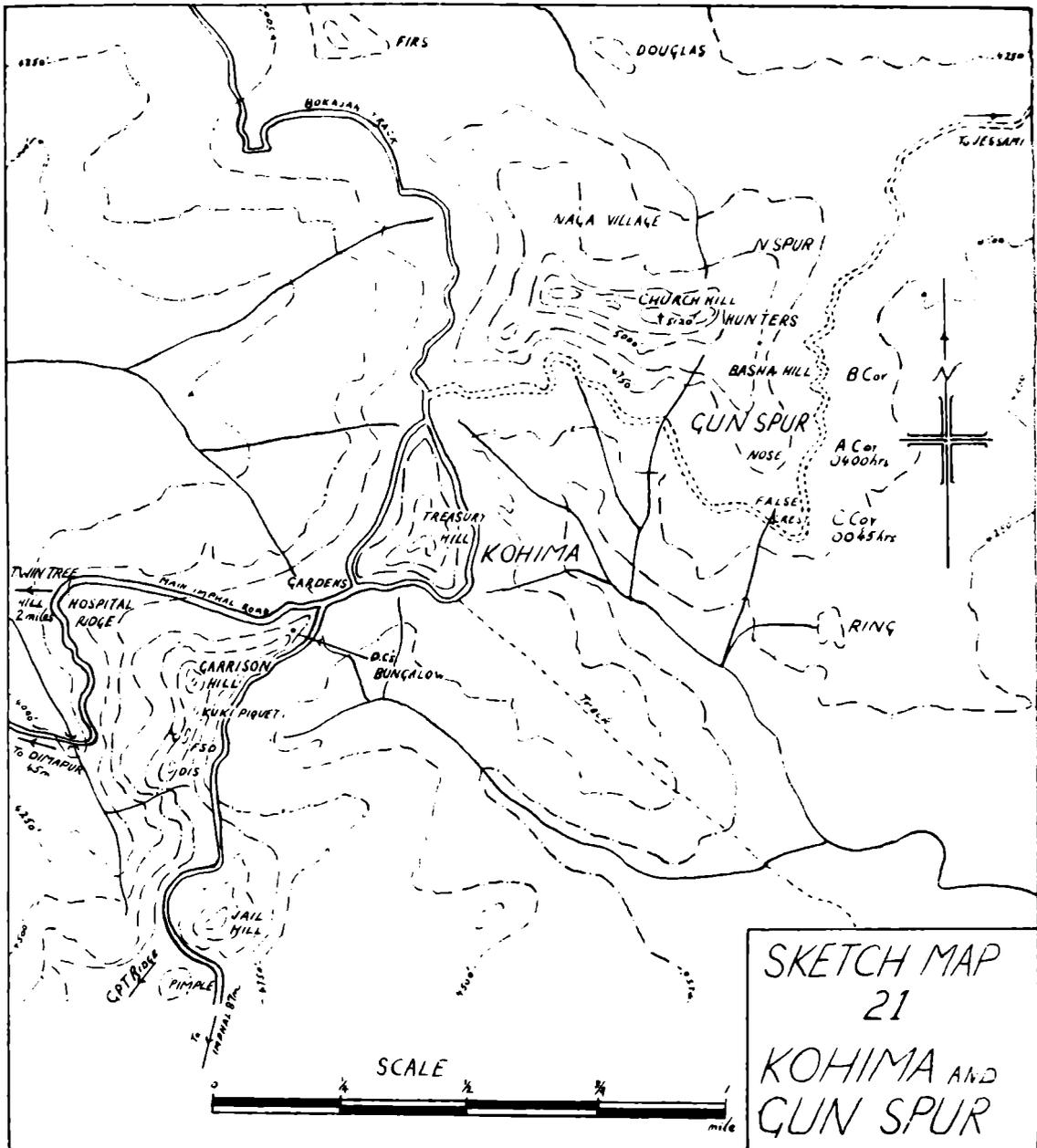
" Patiram then collected his platoon and started to withdraw, when a counter-attack came in from the rear. This was beaten off, and the platoon then withdrew to the Battalion, having killed twelve Japs without any loss to themselves—not even one man wounded."

For his courage and leadership on this occasion Jemadar Patiram was awarded a Military Cross. The moral effect of this raid was so great on the Battalion that every platoon begged to be allowed to do another like it.

But next day, 2nd June, the Battalion was relieved by 4/5th R.G.R. Just before the relief, Captain W. G. Hughes led " D " Company up to seize Hunters, after a short artillery barrage, and consolidated among the many Jap dead without further opposition.

The casualties in the Gun Spur operation were: killed, five G.O.Rs.; wounded, one British officer and 33 G.O.Rs.

Awards for the foregoing operations not already mentioned



included M.Cs. for Subedars Danbahadur Rana and Karnasing Ghale: also 3 I.D.S.Ms. and 3 M.Ms.

From 2nd (evening) to 10th June the Battalion remained in a rest area at Zubza on the road Kohima-Dimapur; then it moved to another area at Mile 4 on the Kohima-Bokajan track.

The battle for the Kohima heights was over, and the next phase opened—the pursuit and the advance by the 2nd Division to clear the road to Imphal. Part of the 7th Division carried out a

wide flanking move along the Jessami track, and wider eastward still went the 23rd (Chindit) Brigade, into the depths of the tangled hills between Jessami and Ukhrul.

Before we leave Kohima we must mention that on Jail Hill, where so many lives were lost, now stands a Memorial to those who fell in the 4/15th Punjabis, the 4th Battalion, and the 77th Indian Field Company. Near by also stands a Memorial to the 1st Battalion the Queen's Royal Regiment, which bears the names of all who fell there, including those of the 4th Battalion.

On 23rd June, the day after the 2nd Division joined hands with the 5th Division at M.S. 109, north of Imphal, the Battalion was ordered to move out on its next operation. This was to be part of a combined move by 33rd Brigade of the 7th Division from the north and the 20th Division from the south to cut the Japanese communications and mop up the remnants around Ukhrul.

We now return to the 3rd Battalion, which we left early in June, about to march up the Iril Valley with the 80th Brigade.

UKHRUL AND AFTER

(Map 22, facing page 232)

THE 3rd BATTALION

The general situation early in June when the 3rd Battalion set off up the Iril Valley is shown on Map 22. The remnants of the Japanese forces defeated at Kohima were streaming away south-eastwards through the Somra and Ukhrul hills. Their straitened forces north of Imphal were being slowly but relentlessly crushed from the north and south, and their communications, or only lines of escape, also ran through the Ukhrul hills. The 20th Division was now to thrust northwards to cut these lines of escape.

The monsoon had broken, and the conditions can well be imagined by those who know Dharmsala, or any Himalayan station, during the rains. But there was to be no question of "monsoon quarters" or rest areas for the 20th Division until it had completed its task six weeks later.

The 3rd Battalion, like many others, was tired after continuous fighting and sadly reduced by heavy casualties. It could muster only about 400 when it marched out with the 80th Brigade column on 7th June, leading 200 mules with it. The "dry weather only" jeep track petered out after a few miles, and the column transport

had to be entirely on a pack-mule basis. The mule convoys with supplies managed to struggle painfully through the mud as far as Molkon, which was reached on 10th July. Then air supply drops had to be started, and these became a regular source of wonder and amusement to the men, who had never before seen their rations floating down from the sky. These were of the "compo" or K type throughout—ingeniously packed but not palatable for long periods. The evening drop was invariably greeted by joyous shouts of "Quartermaster—ayo."

From 10th to 23rd June Molkon formed a base from which units moved out and searched the area in a northerly arc from east to west. "A" Company (Major L. C. Dean) went as far north as Kholen, and in two clashes accounted for eleven Japanese killed, including an officer, and seven wounded, without loss to itself. Another company patrol ambushed a Jap party on the 11th, killing three and wounding one, with a loss of one killed and one wounded, six miles north of Molkon.

On the 24th the 80th Brigade began to move east in echelons to cross the Iril River near Chawai. The 3rd Battalion (less "A" Company, still in "the blue") crossed with Brigade H.Q. on the 25th and reached Leishan the same evening. Next day "D" Company (Major R. Paine) started on a five-day "chukker" north and east, while the Battalion turned south, to reach Shongphel on 30th June, shedding and collecting detached companies in turn. It was hard going, moving most of each day, getting wet to the skin, and digging defences every evening. The Battalion owed much to Captain E. B. Naug, the Medical Officer, whose devoted care prevented dysentery from taking a much heavier toll than it did.

By the end of June the 33rd Brigade (with the 4th Battalion) had left Maram in the north and was across the Iril River making for Ukhrul, but the tale of its progress can wait. Elements of the defeated enemy forces from the Imphal road were now desperately trying to make their escape eastwards before the pincers closed. A considerable pocket of them had formed in the area between the 80th and 100th Brigades, and this had now to be squeezed out. The 80th Brigade spread eastward with 9th F.F.R. directed on Chepu and the Devons on Finches Corner. From 1st to 3rd July the 3rd Battalion probed hard and made limited progress round Shongphel. In clashes on the 1st and 2nd seventeen Japs were killed for a loss of five killed and four wounded. On 4th and 5th July probes on the enemy's flank on

the dominating height of Point 6234 (north-west of Chepu) found it strongly held.

" B " Company, under Major F. T. G. Morcom, occupied Shongphel village on 1st July and was heavily mortared and attacked on the 2nd, but easily beat off all attacks with a loss of four killed and three wounded. Its position, however, was overlooked, mortared and sniped, and out of its twenty-eight mules, fourteen were killed and eleven wounded.

By the 5th the enemy seemed to be pulling out, but they fought back strongly on Point 6234 on the 5th and 6th. On the 8th " A " and " D " Companies, under Majors L. C. Dean and R. Paine, were detached to Chepu to help 9th F.F.R. to deal with a large force trying to break out eastwards. In a two-company attack on the southern ridge of Point 6234 that day heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy, but our own losses were sad and serious. Major R. Paine and 6 G.O.Rs. were killed, and 2 G.Os. and 20 G.O.Rs. were wounded. Major Paine was among those who were killed on the summit by the shower of grenades which greeted the final assault, and he was buried there with military honours.

By 10th July the Battalion was concentrated at Aishan, and after a week of patrolling and work on roads it moved down to the main road a few miles south and was lorried to the Wangjing rest area south of Imphal on the 18th. It was to remain there, apart from some alarms and excursions during the first three weeks, for about five months of rest and recuperation and re-training for the 1945 campaign. Its casualties during the 1944 campaign amounted to:

Killed, 8 B.Os., 2 G.Os., and 78 G.O.Rs.

Wounded, 5 B.Os., 12 G.Os., and 288 G.O.Rs., also 20 G.O.Rs. missing, presumed killed.

THE 4th BATTALION

The conditions which we have already described for the 80th Brigade operations in the south applied equally to those of the 33rd Brigade column moving from the north—the same monsoon, the pack-mule transport, and the supply drops by air. The 4th Battalion had also fought long and lost heavily, and the men were still in what was officially described as a state of " 50% malnutrition " as a result of the long period on short commons in

Arakan. If they were not completely *tagra* or fighting fit, the men showed how tough they were, as not one fell out from exhaustion during the month of arduous operations ahead. These involved the crossing of six mountain ranges, rising to 6,000 and 7,000 feet above sea level, or climbs and descents of about 4,000 feet on each occasion.

The 4th Battalion joined the 33rd Brigade at Maram, thirty miles south of Kohima, on 23rd June, and four days later the column set off. Moving as a brigade column the first day, on a single-file track, it was found that the leading unit had barely covered the twelve miles to camp when the rear unit was passing the starting-point. Thereafter battalion groups moved separately, halting every three days for picking up and distributing the air drop. Like their 3rd Battalion brethren, the men were delighted to see all their needs floating down, including clothing, mail, medicines and even rum!

The 4th Battalion's mountain trail is marked on Map 22, and it need not be recorded in detail, arduous though it was.

It arrived at Furing, six miles short of Ukhrul, on 4th July, without opposition, and was then ordered to push on in the dark to attempt to infiltrate into Ukhrul. Reports of the number of Japs there varied from fifty to 1,000, and in the event it was found to be held in some strength. "D" Company ran into trouble but managed to dig in close under the main enemy position on Big Tree Hill, north-east of the village, and hung on all day (5th) until relieved. The enemy positions were actively probed and raided on the 6th and 7th to pin them for a set attack. Jemadar Dilbahadur Gurung distinguished himself in one bold raid in which he was wounded but completed his task, ten Japs being killed for the loss of only one of his own men, and five others wounded. (He was later Mentioned in Despatches.) Rifleman Manbahadur Thapa won a M.M. for his dash and execution in this scrap.

Major C. J. Nixon, with "C" Company, carried on the good work and despite heavy M.G. fire and shelling finally established the whole Company on the northern ridge of Ukhrul. Before the village was cleared southward next day (8th) by 1st Burma, the 4th Battalion was pulled out to do another night advance to cut the enemy L. of C. east of Ukhrul. Meeting the enemy in position near Luithar next morning, Lieutenant R. S. R. Carr was sent off with "A" Company to do a wide flanking move to seize a hill overlooking Lungchong. "A" Company was

expected to take at least thirty-six hours, as there were no tracks; it had to cut every inch of the way, and could light no fires for fear of giving its position away, but it hacked its way through in under twenty-four hours.

Major C. J. Nixon, with " C " Company, had meanwhile done another of his now famous infiltration acts and had got through to Lungchong an hour earlier, to " A " Company's disgust. There the Battalion consolidated, across the enemy L. of C., and patrolled vigorously towards the Chindwin River, adding to its bag of killed and captured Japs. The final score was 29 killed and 3 captured, against the Battalion's casualties of 3 killed and 10 wounded—and, remarkably, a negligible sick rate.

Colonel Horsford wrote in a Newsletter:

" The tracks round here (Lungchong) had to be seen to be believed. Dead Japs litter the whole area, and many of them had died from starvation. Jap equipment, three-ton lorries, dead mules, saddlery, guns, ammunition, etc., were found everywhere we went. No attempt had been made by the Japs to bury their dead, many of whom were in a horrible state, and we buried them ourselves. These bodies were responsible for many insulting remarks made in Mess: however, we fed pretty well on the whole—on bully beef and biscuits! "

So ended the Battalion's share in the fighting of 1944. Marching from Lungchong on 23rd July, via Finches Corner and Litan, it embussed on the 27th for Zubza, near Kohima. There it remained, as a cadre only, with the majority of its officers and men away on leave or business, until the end of the year.

The cadre was far from idle, however, and training was intensified, as the leave men began to return in the autumn, in preparation for what was bound to be ahead.

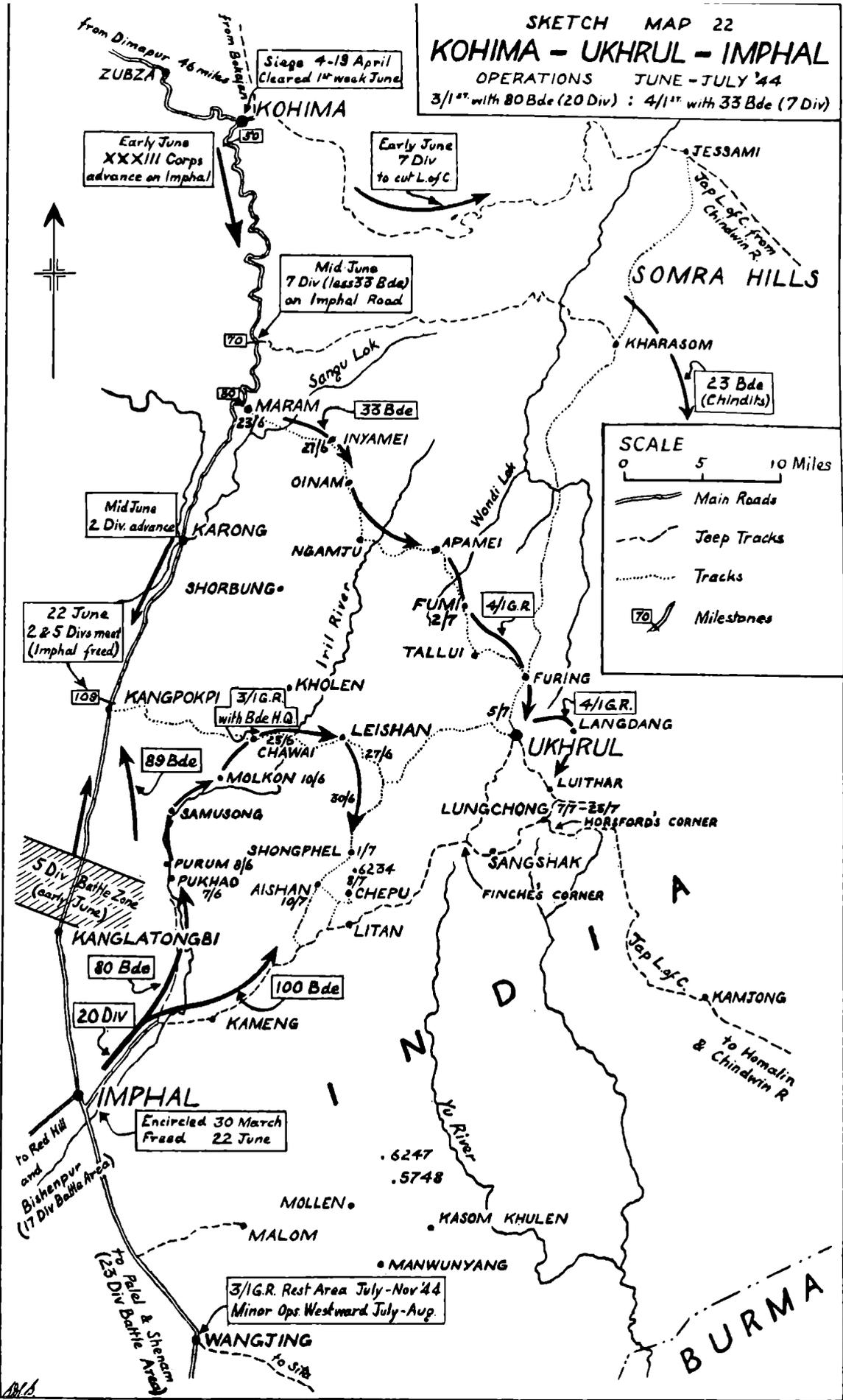
General Slim's Special Order of the Day dated 31st August, 1944, addressed to the 7th Division, said:

" You of the 7th Indian Division have earned a name for yourselves equal to that of the most famous Indian Divisions. Your magnificent fight in the Arakan during the first Japanese offensive will be one of the most glorious pages in the history of the whole War, while your part in the battle of Kohima and the subsequent pursuit added fresh laurels."

The 4th Battalion's casualties during the campaign from May to July, 1944, amounted to:

Killed, 3 B.Os. and 46 G.O.Rs.; wounded, 2 B.Os., 3 G.Os., and 128 G.O.Rs.

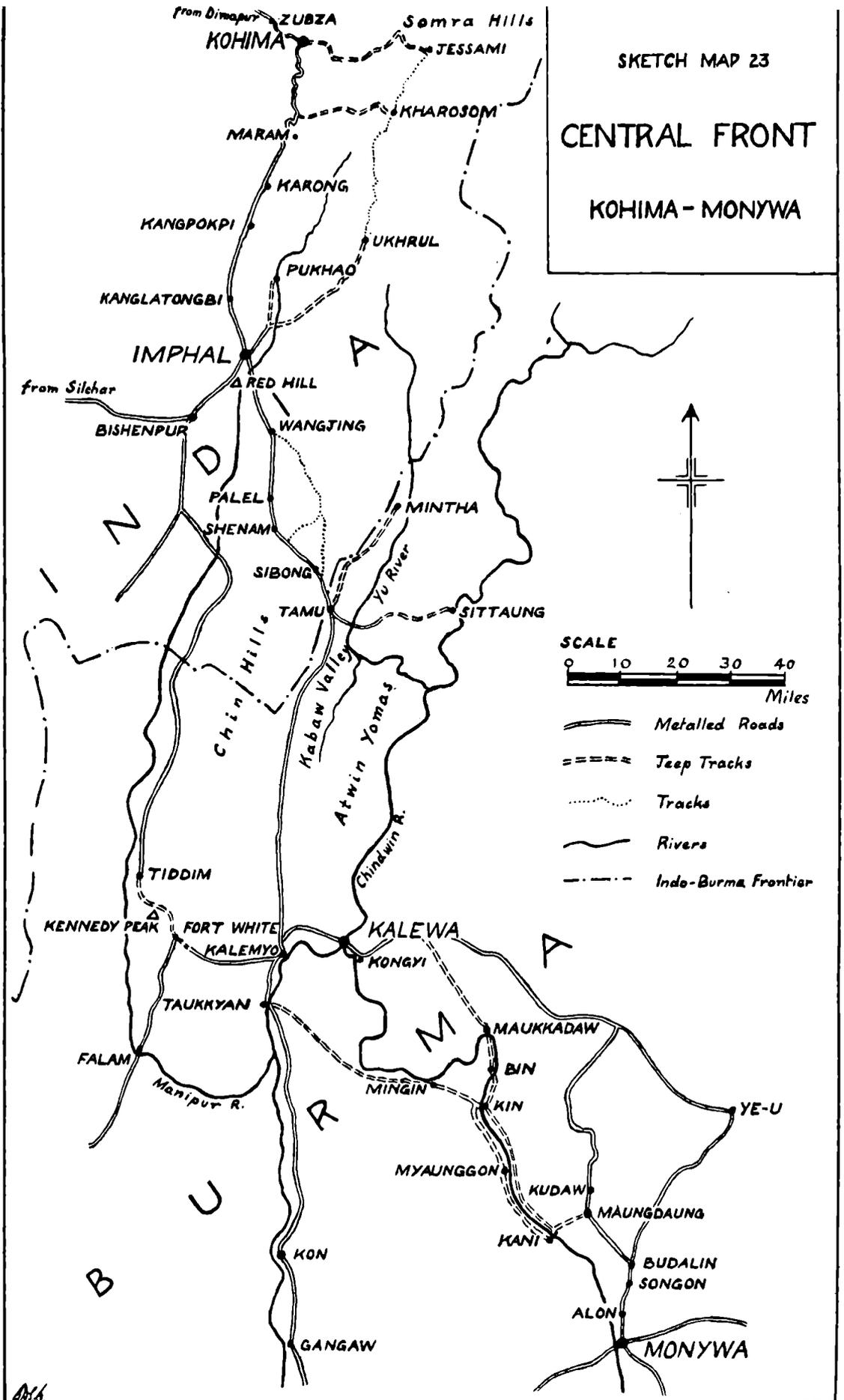
SKETCH MAP 22
KOHIMA - UKHRUL - IMPHAL
 OPERATIONS JUNE - JULY '44
 3/1st with 80 Bde (20 Div) : 4/1st with 33 Bde (7 Div)



SKETCH MAP 23

CENTRAL FRONT

KOHIMA - MONywa



INTERLUDE

Leaving the 3rd and 4th Battalions to enjoy their five months' spell of rest and re-training we must complete the course of the "Monsoon Victory" (as it was popularly described) and set the stage for the advance to the Irrawaddy early in 1945.

As Ukhrul was being cleared the 23rd Division decisively finished the long-drawn-out battle on the Shenam Saddle and thrust on to Tamu. The 11th East African Division then continued the pursuit down the Kabaw Valley. From Bishenpur the 5th Division passed through the 17th to clear the Tiddim road. In the third week of November the two pursuing divisions met at Kalemyo, and early in December three bridge-heads had been secured across the Chindwin at Sittaung, Mawlaik and Kalewa. A jumping-off line had been gained for the next offensive.

The Japanese Army had suffered the most disastrous defeat in its history, up till then. Five of its divisions had been broken up and hunted into Burma, with crippling losses in men and material, leaving 50,000 counted bodies behind. Their total casualties were probably nearer 75,000. Only 600 prisoners were taken, in proof of the fanatical nature of their resistance.

General Slim's Special Order of the Day, in August, 1944, said:

"To the Fifteenth Corps in the Arakan fell the unique honour of being the first British Indian formation to hold, break, and decisively hurl back a major Japanese offensive. Theirs was an example of tenacity and courage which inspired the whole Army.

"The Fourth Corps met the main weight of the Japanese Assam offensive and, in one of the hardest fought and longest battles of the war, shattered it."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE FIRST BATTALION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTHERN BURMA

(*Map 24, page 241*)

AT the end of Chapter Four we left the 1st Battalion setting forth, as part of the 6th Indian Division, on their voyage to Iraq in October, 1941. We noted in the same chapter how both Iraq and Persia were saved from pro-German plots in June of 1941, the month in which Hitler attacked Russia. By October the Germans had swept over most of the Ukraine, and seemed likely to burst through the Caucasian gate to the Middle East in the near future.

The 6th Division was soon dispersed in protective duties on various oilfields and along the L. of C. northwards from Basra, while the 8th and 10th Indian Divisions concentrated northwards, prepared to fight defensive battles around Kirkuk and Mosul. Immediately after landing at Basra on 11th October the 1/1st found themselves separated from their own, 26th, Brigade and condemned to guard duties in the Basra base. They were not dismayed, however; they felt sure that their entry into battle could not be long delayed. Little did they imagine that they were doomed to spend nearly three nomadic years, of toil and sweat but only accidental blood, with never a Nazi in sight.

After four uncomfortable days on a desert, and little else, near Zobair, the Battalion moved to what proved to be their winter quarters at Rawalpindi Camp in the Magil dock area, north of Basra. The next four months might be dismissed in a few words—guards and escorts—but these in fact provided more than just a peaceful routine or daily round. Guards soon found need to be specially alert and tough in dealing with swarms of Arab prowlers and would-be pilferers. It was with some reason that the Battalion's first intelligence report dealt with the heading "Local Inhabitants" in one word—"Dacoits."

Base garrison duties at last came to an end in mid-February of 1942. Travelling north, by train to Baghdad and lorry-borne onwards into Persia, the Battalion reached its next stamping-ground, at Kermanshah, on the last day of the month. It was a timely move in the right direction. The Russians had stood firm all the winter, but a new German offensive was bound to come that summer.

A Newsletter says: " We were very fortunate to find ourselves in such delightful country, up in the hills. M.T. patrolling was our chief task and it proved most interesting and enjoyable, with ample scope for officers and men to enjoy fishing and 'shikar.' " A lively description follows of the happy relations established with the Polish forces which were then passing south, destined eventually for other fronts.

The Battalion had been greeted at Kermanshah by an old friend and recent member of the Battalion, Major J. W. Rundall, who was now in command of the Rest Camp. He and his staff, which included a Polish liaison party of both sexes, effected the necessary introductions to passing Polish units. Appropriately, the 1st Gurkhas and 1st Uhlans became fast friends. Mazurkas and schottisches seemed to mix well with the pipes, as did vodka and "Scotch." In farewell toasts together the two Firsts vowed they would lead the victory march of the Allied armies into Berlin!

For the whole of June most of the 6th Division, including our 1st Battalion, were camped near Senna, about eighty miles north of Kermanshah, and all units were busy exploring the country for suitable defensive positions against a German advance. It was an Arcadian interlude in a land of wooded hills, teeming with game, and of flowing streams full of fish; but it was too good to last. As midsummer passed it seemed likely that the call to action would soon come, and not as at first expected from the north, but from Egypt and the Western Desert. In Russia the German summer offensive had been seriously delayed, first by a Russian counter-stroke at Kharkov in May, and then by stubborn Russian resistance in the Crimea. It was not in fact till August—if we may look ahead—that Hitler's hundred-division drive on Stalingrad and the Caucasus really got under way.

It was fortunate that so many of our troops in Syria, Iraq and Persia were thus free to reinforce our hard-pressed Eighth Army in the Western Desert. The tale of that Army's disasters cannot be told here, but by the end of June it had retreated 400 miles to Alamein, only sixty miles west of Alexandria. There, with

General Auchinleck in personal command, a stand was made. Before this the 10th Division and a brigade of the 8th Division, all from Iraq, had been drawn into the battle. It was the 6th Division's turn to contribute next, and on 1st July the 1st Battalion joined the 26th Brigade Group south of Senna for a desert dash to Egypt.

On the 3rd the 1/1st G.R. and 1/9th G.R., forming the first flight, led off on the first day's drive to Kermanshah. The second stage, to Khanaqin, was marred by an accident to the Mess lorry, which overturned in the Pai-tak Pass, killing the Mess orderly and injuring four others. We may note, in passing, the similarity of the Pai-tak Pass to the familiar Khyber Pass, both at this time being honeycombed with concrete defences against a German invasion. The 1st Battalion will be found scrambling over the Pai-tak crags again later on.

Halting a day at Baghdad to complete equipment, the first flight set off again on 7th July to tackle the now well-worn desert route to Palestine. This 623-mile route between Baghdad and Haifa (marked on Map 24) had then been organized into stages of from 120 to 140 miles each, with a finished tarmac surface except for a hundred-mile gap east of Rutbah. Stage I, across the Euphrates at Fallujah (unpleasantly remembered by old-stagers of the 1917 summer) and past the R.A.F. base at Habbaniyah, provided good going.

On Stage II a howling sand-storm half blinded the drivers, whose colourful remarks about the route map—which said “surface suitable for cross-country movement; alignment of proposed route clearly visible throughout”—are unprintable here. It was better going on the next two stages alongside the oil pipeline from Kirkuk to Haifa, with halts at H.4 and Mafraq.

The drive across the Jordan to Tulkeram, in Palestine, was most enjoyable and surprisingly easy after the warning given at Mafraq: “test brakes here, on account of the many dangerous hills in Palestine”; but these proved to be nothing after Persia and the Pai-tak. Subedar-Major Premsing Rana soon began to recognize scenes of battles with the Turks in 1918, and to fight them all over again. The promised halt for servicing vehicles next day (12th) and the plan for a mass sea bathe at the pleasant seaside resort of Nathanya, only five miles away, never came off. Orders arrived during the night, while many were sampling the night life of Nathanya, to push on at dawn to cover a double stage of 280 miles to Ismailia on the Suez Canal. This was the

most trying trip of all, across the Sinai Desert, where many lorries left the narrow track to founder in the sand and some did not reach Ismailia till time to start again next morning.

There was an unfortunate accident outside Ismailia when an ammunition truck crashed another and blew up, killing one rifleman and severely injuring Jemadar Padambahadur and another rifleman. Given no time to rest at Ismailia, the column drove on all next day across the Nile delta to the western outskirts of Alexandria, where some came to rest and others drove on fourteen miles farther west to Amariya. One company took a wrong turning and went to Cairo, but next day (14th) the Battalion were all collected at Amariya after their drive of more than a thousand miles from Baghdad.

With the arrival of the second flight on 15th July the 26th Brigade Group started work on the Amariya position, on a low ridge overlooking the salt flats of "Lake" Maryut. This was to become the backs-to-the-wall position in front of Alexandria should the Axis armies break through at Alamein, forty-five miles in front. The early days of the month had indeed been critical, and although the Eighth Army had stood firm, and even started to hit back, Egypt could not yet be considered safe—hence the 26th Brigade's last frantic dash of 400 miles.

The Brigade was now under Delta Force but at twelve hours' notice to reinforce the Eighth Army, so the prospects of battle seemed to be bright. There was soon eager competition to join the parties of officers and men being sent up to the Front to gain experience with units of the famous 5th Indian Division.

After a fortnight at Amariya, however, the Battalion was detached southwards along the desert road from Alexandria to Cairo to spend the first half of August under command of 12th A.A. Brigade, defending landing-grounds around Mariopolis.

There it relieved the remnants of the 2/8th G.R. and found itself brigaded with the Scots Guards and the 200 gallant survivors of the Coldstream Guards who had refused to surrender at Tobruk and had fought their way out. A few days after its move the Battalion almost enjoyed its first air raid, as the bombs caused no casualties and only served to cure everyone of the idea that slit trenches were luxuries. In mid-August it was back on the Amariya position again, this time under the so-called 50th British Division. This consisted of a Greek Brigade in the coastal sector, the 26th Indian Brigade in the centre (near Amariya Railway Station), and a Free French Brigade farther south.

There were also East African Pioneers to help in the defences, and coloured South African transport drivers, but at least there were British-manned M.M.Gs. and anti-tank guns in support.

When Rommel made his final and fruitless bid for victory at the end of August it was clear that the "impregnable" position at Amariya would never be tested.

A Newsletter written some months later sums up the consequences, as far as the 1st Battalion was concerned: "Rommel's failure seemed to put an end to our usefulness in Egypt, for soon (mid-September) a warning order came for an impending move, back east, not west." Again: "The high-peak of our 'Mid-East war' was certainly our brief service in Egypt. With a little luck we might have stayed on there and formed part of the Eighth Army. We had several chances—the whole Brigade might have been included in the famous 4th Indian Division, which continued to fight one Brigade short: or we might have been put in as a Battalion when the 1/2nd Gurkhas had most of their H.Q. company blown up in an anti-tank mine demonstration (with most laudable determination and some help from us they trained a complete new set of specialists): or we might have stayed on as escort to the A.A. Brigade."

Before we follow the disappointed 26th Brigade to Syria we may note that by September the hardening of Russian resistance had removed any immediate threat to Persia, but there was still a chance of the Germans attempting a thrust through Turkey. A strong British garrison was therefore needed in Syria both to watch the Turkish frontier and to stiffen the Free French troops, who had scarcely had time to find their feet, or even to disentangle their own loyalties, in a most perplexing political background.

While most of the 26th Brigade moved up to the northern border of Syria in the third week of September, the 1st Battalion settled at Tripoli, in Lebanon. There it formed part of a mixed garrison and was under the operational control of a French regiment for coastal defence between the Palestine border and Latakia. It was also responsible for Tripoli Fortress and a few other guard duties. Working with French Equatorial Africans—popularly known as the Cameroon Highlanders—and also with the Lebanese, added a spice of fun and variety to training exercises. The French officers lacked confidence, and though they could be cajoled into co-operation at work they seemed reluctant to respond to friendly overtures. What stirred them most, and the townsmen too, were the ceremonial retreats beaten by our Pipes and Drums.

The Band earned an unusual but apparently sincere compliment on one occasion, when the French Regimental Colonel compared their verve and precision with those of the famous Folies Bergère of Paris!

The men revelled in sea bathing, which provided them with both a novel sport and a welcome substitute for morning P.T. Inland the mountains tempted the Battalion to feats of arduous climbing, one trip taking it to the famous Kerak des Chevaliers, hill-top fortress of the twelfth-century Crusaders.

The Second Battle of Alamein, early in November, eased the whole situation in the Near and Middle East and was indeed to mark the turning-point in the Anglo-American war effort. The Eighth Army's triumphant westward drive was watched with envious eyes by those who had hoped to be with it, but soon they consoled themselves with hopeful plans for an advance through Turkey.

Unfortunately the Turks thought otherwise, and small blame to them. It was true that by the end of November the fatal magnet of Stalingrad had drawn the Sixth German Army to its own encirclement (and eventual destruction) and that the Caucasian gate had been firmly and finally closed. But the Germans still dominated both the Balkans and the Aegean Sea and presented a still-formidable threat to a practically unarmed Turkey.

Thwarted in turn, first in Africa and then in Turkey, the 26th Brigade soon found itself surplus to requirements in Syria too, and at the end of December, 1942, it was recalled to Paiforce to rejoin its own 6th Division.

This unfortunate Division was destined to spend the remaining war years in semi-police and garrison duties, protecting oil wells and pipelines, and keeping order in this vast, unstable area of the true Middle East. It was to such unheroic but necessary duties that the 26th Brigade returned in January, 1943. Although its hopes were to be raised, and dashed again, as other divisions went to the war in Italy, and the term "Paiforce Home-Guard" seemed likely to be attached to it for good, the Brigade eventually proved luckier than the rest of its Division. After eighteen months, which we shall briefly chronicle, it was to find its way to India and thence to the Burma Front to share in the reconquest of that country.

Embussing at Tripoli on 7th January, 1943, the 1st Battalion drove by stages via Homs and Damascus to Mafraq, where it joined the same Desert route which it had followed westwards

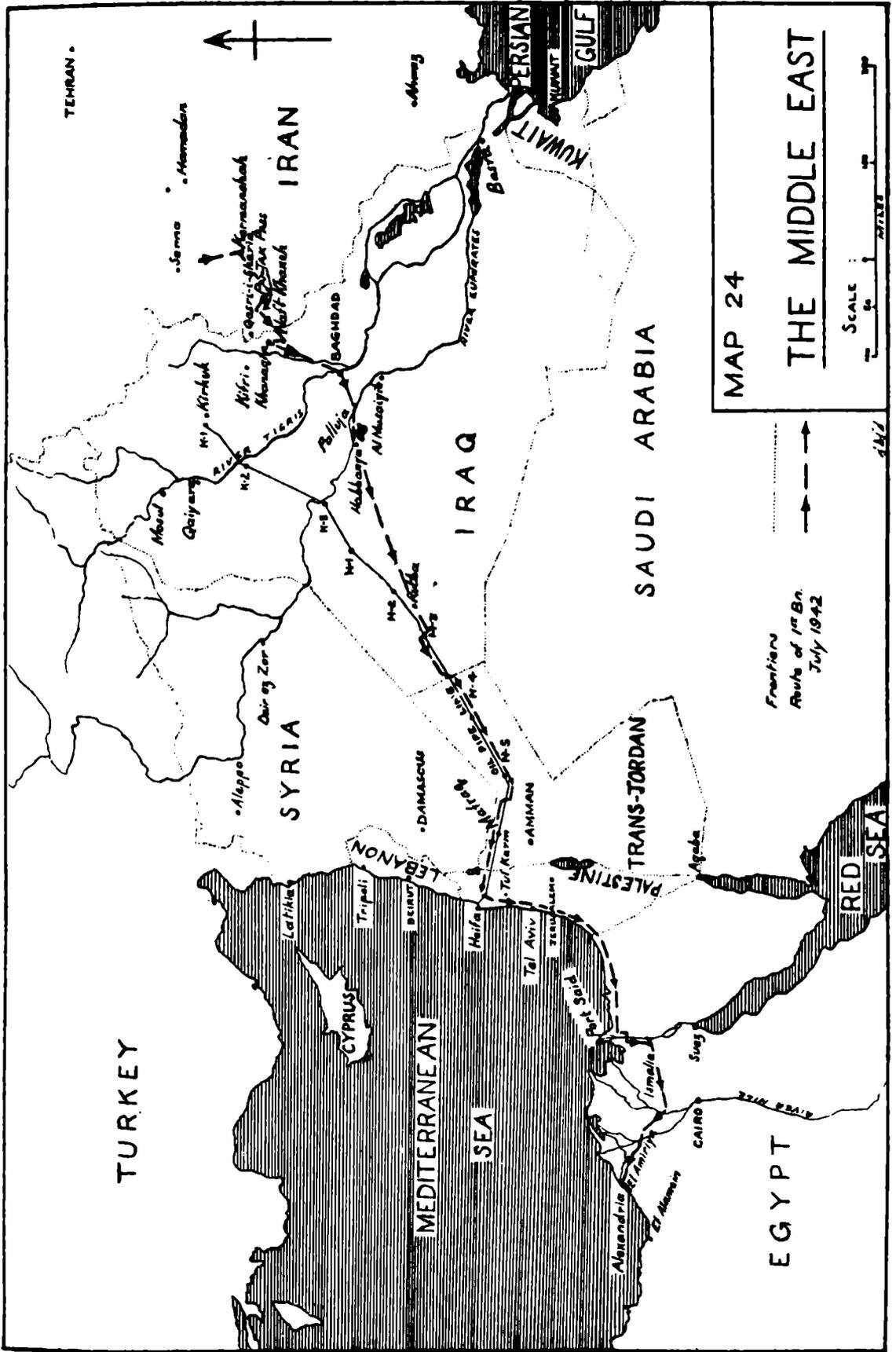
six months earlier, to reach Baghdad on the 14th. A few days later it was once again grouped with the 26th Brigade but split up in detachments guarding oilfield installations in the foothills on both sides of the Persian border about 100 miles north-east of Baghdad. Based first on Qasr-i-shirin and then on Khanaqin, the Battalion provided local guards and others in the Naft Shah and Naft Khaneh oilfields, not far from where it had fought the Turks in the grim battle of Jabal Hamrin in March, 1917. (See Chapter Sixteen of Volume One.)

Those that could be spared from guard duties joined in various formation training exercises which culminated at the end of May, 1943, in Scheme "Enderby." The Battalion was concentrated for this near Kifri, then moved northwards to fight a defensive "battle" near Qaiyara, thirty miles south of Mosul. It returned for a while to Kifri early in June, and then for four months was again widely dispersed. But we shall not attempt a detailed itinerary or location statement for this period up to the end of October. Place names like Kifri, Khanaqin, Kerind, Kerman-shah, Qasr-i-shirin and Sar-i-pul Zuhab would recur in bewildering confusion. One company went as far afield as Hamadan. But from early November the Battalion enjoyed a more settled life, doing some serious training, mostly in mountain warfare, around the Pai-tak Pass. Following this respite came another period of six weeks, from early February, 1944, of guard duties in and around Baghdad, and then three months at Kirkuk, split up again at various oil wells and pumping stations. Hopes were again raised in April when Major C. E. Jarvis and two G.Os. accompanied a 6th Division team on a visit to the Italian battle-front, but nothing further happened. During May and June the first large leave parties left for Dharmasala, but these had only a short start on the Battalion itself, as the 26th Brigade soon received a warning order to move to India. The "Home Guard" phase was at last coming to an end. After a fortnight at Shaiba, near Basra, the Battalion embarked on the 10th July, 1944, and reached Bombay on the 19th, nearly three years after it had sailed westwards from India.

SEVEN MONTHS IN INDIA

The Battalion came to rest at Tanda Camp on the 23rd July in sight of its hilltop "home," but within a month all but a small "skeleton" had disappeared on leave.

Due to a mistake on the part of H.Q. Southern Command,



MAP 24
THE MIDDLE EAST
 SCALE : 1" = 100 MILES

Frontiers
 Route of 1st Bn
 July 1942

most of the men were given eighty-four days' leave instead of sixty like the rest of the 26th Brigade. Thus the Battalion did not begin to reassemble at the Brigade's new concentration area, near Bangalore in Southern India, until well on in November, nearly a month later than the other units.

An outbreak of smallpox caused a further delay, so the Battalion was not fully integrated and reorganized on the Burma establishment until early in December, when the 26th Brigade left for Northern Burma. The Battalion had perforce to remain behind, to follow two months later after some intensive jungle training around Ballehonnur (reached from railhead at Shimoga) in the north-western part of Mysore State.

Meanwhile, in August, a new commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel C. H. D. Berthon, had taken over command in place of Lieutenant-Colonel F. M. W. Crooke, M.M., who had been posted as Commandant of the Regimental Centre in May. Colonel Berthon has already figured as Commanding Officer of the 4th Battalion in Arakan, and he was now to lead the 1st Battalion back for the first few months of the reconquest of Burma from the north.

The 1st Battalion at last set off from Bangalore on the 10th February, 1945, on their long journey to the Front, reaching Ledo, the railhead in the north-eastern corner of Assam, on the 17th. During the next four days it was "flown in" to Bahe (Map 25), about 300 miles to the south, in ten daily sorties of Dakota aircraft. Each Dakota took either twenty-four men with their personal luggage, or twenty-two men and 500 pounds of stores, so each daily lift delivered a complete rifle company and two specialist platoons, or their equivalent.

NORTHERN BURMA

(Map 25, page 245)

At Bahe the Battalion rejoined its 26th Brigade behind the 36th British Division's battle-front on the Shweli River. This Division's campaign in the north has been described, by its newly-arrived combatants, as a "private war fought and won by a private army." It is certainly convenient to treat it as such here, and to carry the 1st Battalion through to Central Burma, regardless of the march of events elsewhere. The parts played by the 3rd and 4th Battalions in the triumphant advance of the Fourteenth Army to the Irrawaddy and beyond will be reviewed in their turn presently.

The 36th Division was in the operational command of General Dan I. Sultan, of the United States Army, who had relieved General Stilwell in the Northern Combat Area in the autumn of 1944. It had been battling southward from Myitkyina since August, 1944, with one column thrusting down the railway corridor (to join hands with the 19th Division in mid-December) and another, which now concerns us, southward along the Bhamo road. As a sidelight, it was when the Chinese Army from the east reached Bhamo on 27th January, 1945, that Lord Louis Mountbatten was able to report: "The first part of the orders I received at Quebec has been carried out. The land route to China is open."

At the battle of the Shweli crossing near Myitson the Japanese had put up their last determined stand in this area. The 1st Battalion arrived too late for this, but was represented there by its Defence Platoon of fifty, which was reported to have acquitted itself well at the crisis of the battle.

Two companies crossed the Shweli on 22nd February to come under orders of the 72nd British Infantry Brigade, which had taken the lead. The rest of the Battalion followed next day, to establish a secure base for patrolling, and had its first clash that day, killing two Japanese for a loss of one killed and one wounded. It moved out on the 24th to probe the enemy positions located the previous day, and killed four more, again at a cost of one killed and one wounded.

Ten days were then spent in further patrolling from changing bases or in protective duties behind the front. Its next operation of any consequence took the form of a right hook which landed the Battalion south of Mongmit before the Japanese had left it. It was a far from easy jungle route which the Battalion had to follow, but it hardly justified one press reporter's description of it as "impenetrable," nor was it leech ridden and malaria haunted. In fact, one senior scribe would have us believe that the march was a pleasant country ramble in the delightful climate of a Northern Burmese spring. He had the grace, however, to sympathize with his less fortunate brethren in the 3rd and 4th Battalions elsewhere. He rightly presumed that none of them would be enjoying the relaxation of his idle hour under a tree with the *Times* cross-word puzzle, so rapidly delivered with other comforts by air. Nor could they enjoy (?) a furious jeep trip, with their racing driver Commanding Officer at the wheel, to hunt for rubies at Mogok.

Mongmit was cleared on 10th March by a lorried column of the 1/19th Hyderabad Regiment moving down from the north, and the advance continued.

Probing southwards from Mongmit next day the 1st Battalion engaged several enemy rear parties, killing four Japanese, wounding two, including an officer, and taking one prisoner. Our own losses were five killed.

The 26th Brigade then took the lead once more, and the 1st Battalion came under its orders to follow the 2nd Buffs along the road to Mogok. On 14th March the 1st Battalion passed through the Buffs and covered twelve miles before it contacted the main Japanese positions covering Mogok, next day. Hostile shelling caused fourteen casualties, while the Battalion proceeded with its advanced-guard task of fixing the enemy front and flanks, throughout the 16th and 17th. "C" Company started off on a wide hook across precipitous country on the 16th, and occupied a position behind the enemy's left rear next day.

Meanwhile, the other companies continued to press and probe in turn until, by a process of determined infiltration, they cleared the heights which dominated the entrance to Mogok. A M.M. was won here by Rifleman Chakrabahadur Pun. The way was then clear for the 1st Hyderabad Regiment to pass through and take the lead on 19th March.

Next day the 1st Battalion followed on what became a long and rapid route march, through Monglong to the Burma road near the Hawe Hung Monastery on 2nd April, and thence to Maymyo on the 9th. The famous Burma road, which this northern campaign had reopened, did not live up to expectation; it was no tarmac highway, but little more than a rough dirt-track.

But their rest camp on the banks of the Harcourt Butler lake, Maymyo, gave no cause for complaint, though they were to enjoy it for little more than a week. Orders had come through for the 1st Battalion, along with two other (Indian) battalions of the 36th Division, to replace three British battalions in the 20th Division (then around Magwe).

The Battalion duly moved off southward on 18th April, with Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Jarvis now in command (in place of Lieutenant-Colonel C. H. D. Berthon, evacuated sick on 8th March), to come under orders of the 32nd Brigade at Taungdingyi, 150 miles to the south, on 20th April. There we must leave it to return to the Fourteenth Army and the exploits of the 3rd and 4th Battalions during the preceding four months.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

TO THE IRRAWADDY AND BEYOND

(Map 34, facing page 296)

THE advance of the Fourteenth Army, beginning in December, 1944, led it away from the tangled hills and jungles of the frontier zone into the comparatively flat and open country of Central Burma. It was a different climate, too, in this so-called "dry belt" extending from the Shwebo Plain in the north to Prome in the south.

For the troops this meant a change from the laborious tactics of the jungle to those of mechanized movement and mobility. But our troops were well prepared; in fact the speed and vigour of our early thrusts seemed to disconcert the Japanese. General Slim had planned to concentrate both his corps on the Shwebo Plain to fight a decisive battle there. But it was soon evident that the Japanese, with their forward defences beginning to crumble, were pulling out to get behind the Irrawaddy.

General Slim then made the dramatic change of plan which was later described as a master stroke by the Japanese Commander-in-Chief himself. This was, in short, to swing the IV Corps from the left to the extreme right flank, move it secretly down the Kabaw and Myittha Valleys, and gain a bridge-head near Pakkoku. Then a mechanized, armoured and partially air-borne force was to seize Meiktila, the nodal point of all enemy communications to their Fifteenth Army and a big airfield centre, eighty miles south of Mandalay.

We can now fit the 3rd and 4th Battalions into this new pattern as neither of them was involved in the early moves and did not go into action until almost on the banks of the Irrawaddy itself. The 3rd Battalion, following the 20th Division down the east bank of the Chindwin, marched 200 miles from near Kalemyo before it joined battle near Nabet in the delta between the Chindwin and Irrawaddy Rivers. The 4th Battalion's Division, the

7th, was originally held in reserve to be flown in to the expected battle area near Shwebo, but it was now to follow the secret thrust to the west and gain the decisive bridge-head near Pakkoku. From its rest area near Kohima the Battalion (with its 33rd Brigade) had to cover 515 miles to the scene of its river crossing in mid-February. We shall therefore deal with this later and return to the 20th Division's operation west of Mandalay.

This Division, like the 2nd on its left (east) and the 19th, still farther east (moving from the north on Shwebo), met fierce resistance in its path to the Irrawaddy. The Japanese had posted strong advanced detachments, notably at Budalin and Monywa, and it was only after bitter fighting during the first three weeks of January that these hard nuts were cracked. These belonged to the Japanese 33rd Imperial Guards Division, which was holding the Irrawaddy facing our 20th Division's front. As a point of interest, this Japanese division's boundary with the Twenty-eighth Army on the left lay just where the 7th Division's crossing was to be made. Lieutenant-General Tanaka's dispositions, as shown in his own situation map reproduced as Map 29 (*facing page 268*), were indeed to concern both our 3rd and 4th Battalions in due course.

General Tanaka was determined to hold a strong bridge-head position north of the Irrawaddy, and proposed to use this as a sally-post for counter-attacks and to deny observation over his main positions south of the river.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the 20th Division met stubborn opposition on the north bank and notably in the delta region of the two big rivers, where part of the 213th and 214th Japanese Regiments were strongly entrenched around Sulegon and Nabet. This is where the 3rd Battalion came into action with the 80th Brigade early in February, 1945, but we shall pick up its trail from the start.

THE 3rd BATTALION

(*Maps 23, facing page 232 and 29, facing page 268*)

Lieutenant-Colonel G. H. W. Bond, late of the 1st Battalion, had assumed command on 1st November, 1944, before the Battalion moved up from its rest area at Wangjing to spend the last weeks of 1944 at Taukkyan air-strip, ten miles south of Kalemyo. Before it started its long march forward on 30th

December "A" Company was detached under Major L. C. Dean to carry out a long-range roving mission west of the Chindwin as a taskforce known as "Deancol." After a week's cross-country trek Deancol reached Kin, on the west bank of the Chindwin, and established a firm base there on 1st January, 1945. Hearing of the presence of enemy in Myaunggon, farther down the river, Major Dean took two platoons out early next morning, surrounded the village, and mopped up most of the garrison by a surprise attack. For this exploit, which accounted for eight Japanese dead and five wounded, for a loss of four wounded, Major Dean was later awarded the M.C.

The Battalion, meanwhile, had moved through Kalewa, crossing the new Bailey bridge there on the night 1st/2nd January, 1945, and thence to Maukkadaw and Bin, where it picked up Deancol on the 5th. It moved down both banks of the Chindwin to clear Kani and then, crossing to the east bank, it completed its 180-mile approach march (via Budalin and Songon) at Monywa on 23rd January. A week later it moved to Zayetkon, and on the 1st February made its first real tactical advance to gain contact with the enemy. "C" Company, under Major A. I. Jack, was detached on a separate mission towards Sulegon, five miles west of Nabet, while the rest of the Battalion aimed for the prominent cathedral spire in Nabet.

ACTIONS NEAR NABET

(Map 26, page 251)

Approaching Nabet from the north the Battalion found an impetuous jeep-borne Brigadier (Greeves) already in action, and Colonel Bond was immediately led off to do a reconnaissance without force (one section) towards the high ground at White Pagoda, about 500 yards west of the village. This quickly drew fire, but "D" Company doubled up to the rescue and rushed the hill on the heels of a Japanese company, which was seen making off to the south. Nabet was then occupied and the attached M.M.G. Platoon of the Jat Regiment came effectively into action against another party of Japs withdrawing southward. A special officers' patrol, under Major L. C. Dean, later probed skilfully forward and drew heavy fire from a strongly held position in the Ponggyi Kyaung area of Taunggyi. Digging-in continued under harassing shell fire in which a truck and ten mules were knocked out. The cathedral spire, in which the supporting 9th Field



THE IMPHAL—UKHRUL ROAD



“ SITA ” (LEFT BACKGROUND) FROM THE FOOT OF RALPH HILL
(3rd BATTALION ACTIONS)

Folding Boats for Irrawaddy Crossing on the Shenam—Tamu Road

December "A" Company was detached under Major L. C. Dean to carry out a long-range roving mission west of the Chindwin as a taskforce known as "Deancol." After a week's cross-country trek Deancol reached Kin, on the west bank of the Chindwin, and established a firm base there on 1st January, 1945. Hearing of the presence of enemy in Myaunggon, farther down the river, Major Dean took two platoons out early next morning, surrounded the village, and mopped up most of the garrison by a surprise attack. For this exploit, which accounted for eight Japanese dead and five wounded, for a loss of four wounded, Major Dean was later awarded the M.C.

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(3rd BATTALION ACTIONS)

Folding Boats for Irrawaddy Crossing on the Shenam—Tamu Road



ATTACK BY 3rd BATTALION FROM NABET ON TAUNGGYI, 5th FEBRUARY, 1945

Left : " A " Company, Major L. C. Dean, forming up under cover of " Logquake "

Right : Company advancing

IRRAWADDY CROSSING, NYAUNGU



Enemy Shore from the Air



4th Battalion embarking



FIELD-MARSHAL LORD WAVELL PINNING ON TO JEMADAR
DHARMSING THAPA THE M.C. WON AT CRETE EAST
(3rd BATTALION)



Right: LIEUTENANT-GENERAL SIR WILLIAM SLIM, FOURTEENTH
ARMY
Left : MAJOR-GENERAL D. D. GRACEY, 20th DIVISION



RETURNING FROM PATROL IN SITTANG SWAMPS
4th Battalion, August, 1945



VICTORY SMILE

Regiment had established an O.P., was also hit and the stairway destroyed, belying the Gunners' assertion that the Japs would never hit it in a hundred rounds: it was their eighth.

Next day (2nd February), Major C. U. Blascheck, M.C., with "D" Company, made a resolute but unsuccessful attack on the Ponggyi Kyaung area following an airstrike by a squadron of Hurribombers. But the available covering fire provided by a Gunner troop, the Jat M.M.Gs. and the Battalion mortars was not enough to subdue the hail of fire from the deeply dug-in enemy—later proved to be two full companies, with M.M.Gs., of the 213th Japanese Regiment.

"D" Company had a difficult task disengaging and getting back its casualties, which had amounted to 1 G.O., Jemadar Jagbir Thapa, died of wounds; 4 G.O.Rs. killed; and 13 G.O.Rs. wounded. Information gained later put the enemy casualties at forty killed.

Colonel Bond was wounded and evacuated during an enemy bombardment of Nabet that evening but returned to duty eight days later. With Major C. M. Dodkins in command, the next few days were spent in patrolling and planning for the next attack.

The 80th Brigade was now widely dispersed in fulfilment of its task of engaging the maximum number of enemy troops in the delta and drawing their attention from the Myinmu area farther east, where the 20th Division were to force a crossing. Pressure had to be maintained, but at Nabet, as elsewhere, only a share of the limited artillery and armoured resources could be spared for the purpose. Major Dodkins could not get the squadron of tanks he wanted, but was allotted two field batteries and an anti-tank troop to support him.

Both an airstrike, by Hurribombers, and a "logquake" by sixteen P.38 American Lightnings were also promised. The latter was a new experiment in dropping petrol-tank bombs to fire the village and, it was hoped, suffocate the deep-dug bunker defenders. (*See Plate 9.*) The attack was set for 5th February, but was specifically limited to a one-company front by the scale of the support available.

The lot fell to "A" Company, the strongest, under Major L. C. Dean, whose attack was to follow immediately after the logquake, timed for 1350–1420 hours (the airstrike was to come thirty minutes earlier). At the last moment, as "A" Company was forming up, orders arrived that troops should not advance

until forty minutes after the logquake, owing to the danger of fumes. Major Dodkins saw, however, that the logquake, though spectacular, had been overdispersed and partly off its mark, so he decided to launch "A" Company at 1437 hours under cover of his prearranged supporting fire. (*Plate 9.*)

But, alas! the enemy were quite unsubdued, and replied in as deadly fashion as before. Gallant efforts were made to close in, particularly by Havildar Manbir Thapa, whose leading platoon lost all its section commanders and three others killed, and six wounded, but this and other efforts proved of no avail. Snipers in tree-tops, though engaged by M.M.Gs., continued to take their toll. Major Dean and his 2nd-in-Command, Subedar Amarjang Gurung, were both wounded, and other casualties mounted seriously, so the attack was called off at 1520 hours. The withdrawal and removal of the casualties proved perilous and would never have been achieved without the help of Captain J. Murray, M.C., and Lieutenants C. V. M. Neely and A. R. Pickin, and also of the Medical Officer, Captain E. B. Naug, who all came forward into the "beaten zone." Lieutenant W. M. Harrison also went boldly out to contact Manbir's platoon and bring it back from its advanced position after dark.

The casualties of the day came to: 1 British and 1 Gurkha officer wounded; 24 G.O.Rs. killed and 14 wounded. In addition, thirty others had slight wounds but returned to duty after treatment.

It was some consolation to be told by some locals late that night that they had been forced to help drive fourteen bullock carts full of Japanese dead and wounded from Taunggyi.

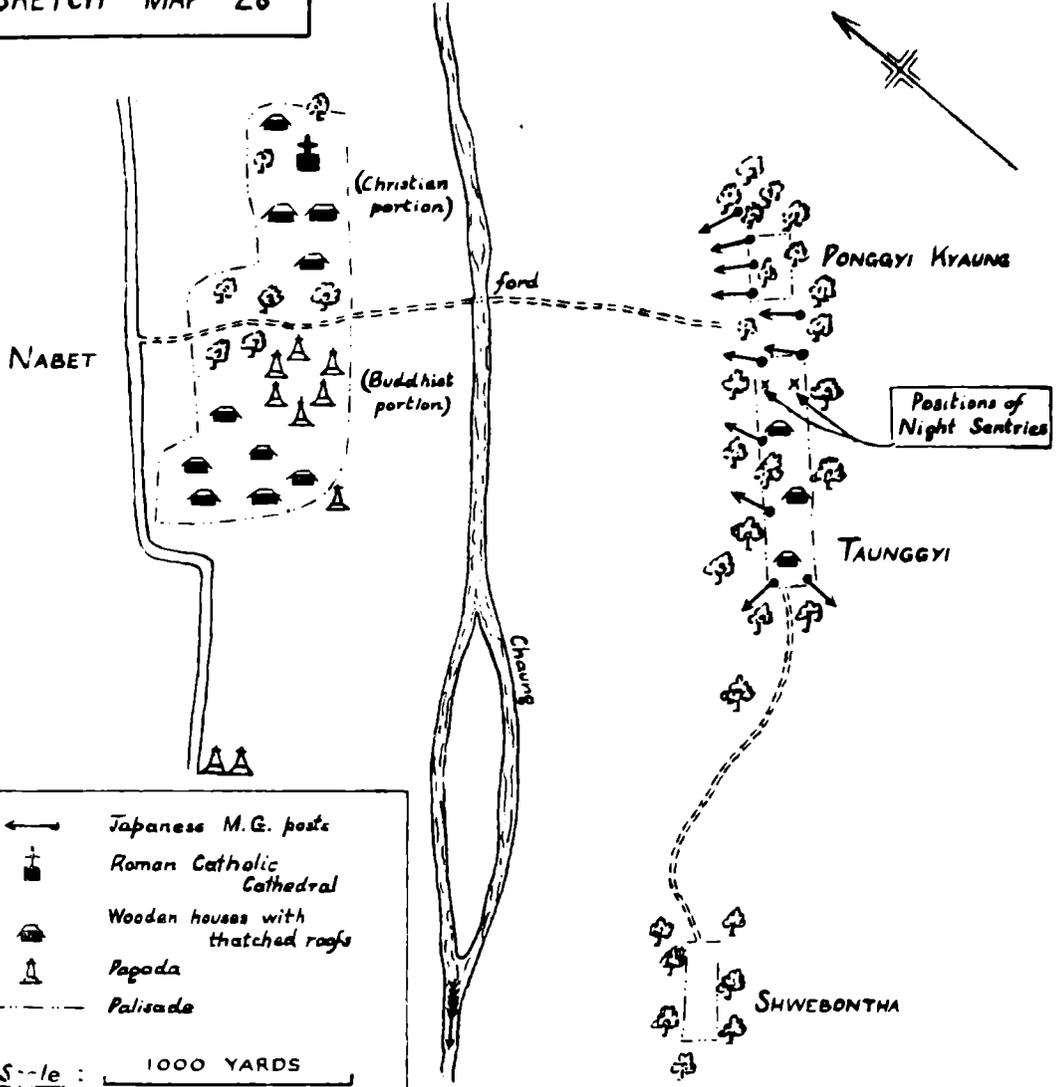
Next day the good news came that a squadron of tanks from their old friends the 7th Light Cavalry would be available to support a further attack on the 7th; also thirty-six Thunderbolts and a squadron of Hurribombers. The attack on the 7th went entirely according to plan, which was briefly as follows:

1. "D" Company, supported by the cavalry tanks, the air-strikes and increased Gunner support (including two field batteries), was to attack and capture the Ponggyi Kyaung area.

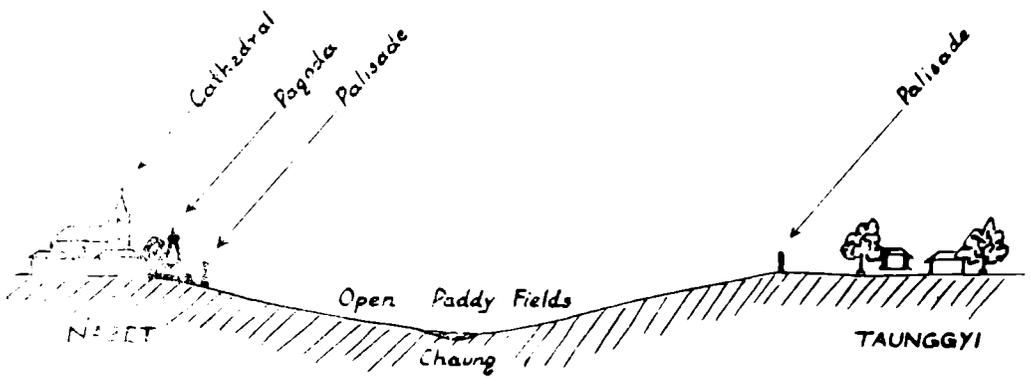
2. "B" Company was then to turn west through "D" and capture Taunggyi village, while two platoons of "A," with the Defence Platoon and Mortar Platoon, were to harass the western flank of Taunggyi.

This time, thanks largely to the 7th Cavalry tanks, it was almost a walk-over. As soon as the two defended areas were cleared,

SKETCH MAP 26



PLAN NABET - TAUNGGYI



Not to Scale

A.D.S.B.

SECTION NABET - TAUNGGYI

a party of Indian Sappers destroyed them with "beehive" charges, losing two wounded during the action. Fifty-one Japanese bodies were counted, most of them having fallen to the tanks, and twenty-four fresh graves were also found. It was estimated that out of the original garrison of about 250 only about three could have escaped.

Having mopped up thoroughly, the troops withdrew to their harbours. The Battalion losses were only one killed and seven wounded, all G.O.Rs. The 7th Light Cavalry Squadron, to whom the Battalion owed so much, had one British officer wounded. The same areas were swept again next day, to clear up a few hardy snipers, without loss to us.

For the next fortnight, up to 25th February, the Battalion continued to harass the Japanese wherever they could be found in its area, which had been extended on the 13th to include Pozadaw (where H.Q. were established) and Cheyndaw as well as Nabet and Sulegon, where "C" Company had been in action since the advance to Nabet. Major C. M. Dodkins was wounded by both shell and machine-gun fire while making a reconnaissance of Pozadaw on 13th February. His distinguished leading of the Battalion in the recent attacks on Nabet, followed by further services down the Irrawaddy and at Saigon later in the year, was rewarded by a D.S.O.

Meanwhile Major A. I. Jack, with "C" Company, had been given a wide belt east of the Chindwin in which to patrol and harass the enemy. Moving through Thanetkon, and thence to Kyaukyit, Major Jack went forward on the 4th with armoured cars of the 11th P.A.V.O. Cavalry, to reconnoitre a big bunker position at Sulegon. The Brigadier (Greeves), always in the forefront, came up with the Cavalry C.O., Colonel Morrison, to inspect the apparently empty position, but suddenly this erupted like a disturbed ants' nest, and firing broke out all round. Fortunately, the only casualties in the evasive action which followed were one G.O.R., and two I.O.Rs. who were temporarily knocked out in an armoured car.

"C" Company and the armoured cars again established themselves on top of the bunkers next day, but could not get at the inmates in their underground and interconnected burrows; nor, without explosives, could they do any destruction, so they had to withdraw under mortar fire, losing one killed and one wounded; but four Japanese snipers had been shot down out of the trees.

During a third attack on the 7th the enemy put down heavy mortar concentrations which forced the armoured cars to withdraw, and " C " Company had to follow suit. An enemy attempt at ambush on the way back led to a sharp encounter in which the Japanese lost one officer and four other ranks killed, at a cost to us of three wounded.

After Sulegon had been cleared by a weightier assault on the 9th, " C " Company reverted to its role of aggressive patrolling until it rejoined the Battalion at Pozadaw on 15th February.

ACROSS THE IRRAWADDY

(Map 29, facing page 268)

Eastwards, near Myinmu, the 20th Division had effected a crossing of the Irrawaddy on 12th/13th February, and a fierce bridge-head battle had been in progress for a fortnight when the 3rd Battalion crossed the river on the 27th. The weight and fury of the Japanese counter-attacks became proof of the success of the 20th Division's role at this stage, which was to draw the enemy away from the north and west. In the north the 19th Division had begun to break out of its bridge-head to move south on Mandalay. On the west the 7th Division had been expanding its bridge-head, first gained on the 14th, to form a spring-board for the 17th Division's decisive thrust on Meiktila. We shall revert to the 4th Battalion (7th Division) later, but can conveniently complete the 3rd Battalion's record in the bridge-head and break-out up to the end of March, when it earned a rest.

Some of the fiercest fighting in the bridge-head was around Talingon, and it was near here that the 3rd Battalion went into action early in March. " C " Company (Captain J. D. Westlake) started clearing a bunker area near Kanlan on the 3rd, and killed six enemy, but could not complete its task before the Battalion was ordered to concentrate at Talingon. In this action the Adjutant, Captain J. Murray, was wounded by shell fire.

On the 6th, " D " Company (Major C. U. Blascheck, M.C.) continued the battle where " C " Company had left off. Closely preceded by a squadron of Lee tanks (254th Tank Brigade) and supported by two field batteries and one anti-tank battery, " D " Company quickly overran the position. Over seventy dead Japs were counted, but there was no time for a thorough search as the Battalion was on the move towards Magyi. The Company claimed one officer and twenty killed, as well as four prisoners (the

officer and an N.C.O. having been cut down in a kukri charge during the early advance), for a loss of two killed and twelve wounded.

The Battalion reached Magyi late on 7th March after several skirmishes, and occupied Kanma and Htontha next day. The enemy struck back at both places the following night, but paid for their temerity. In a sharp encounter on the 8th, eight Japanese were killed, but heavy shelling of Htontha caused us twenty-two casualties (two killed). From the 10th onwards the Battalion forged ahead, doing ten miles a day, to reach Chaunggua on 13th March. Next day a Japanese position at Ohnmin was captured at the cost of two officers wounded, Captain P. Lynch-Garbett and Jemadar Pirthibahadur Gurung, before Dwehla, too, was occupied. This village lay about ten miles west of Kyaukse, which was the 80th Brigade's break-out objective.

The Japanese Fifteenth Army was now in a desperate position: Meiktila had fallen early in March and continued to resist all efforts to recapture it. Mandalay had also fallen by 14th March except for the closely besieged Fort Dufferin. Kyaukse was now to be the scene of bitter fighting as the 20th Division closed in, the 80th Brigade from the west and 32nd Brigade from the south. The Japanese fought back fiercely to retain this last bolt-hole for their defeated forces in the north.

It was in this closing-in process by the 80th Brigade that the 3rd Battalion was now to play its part. Late on 15th March two companies, "C" (Major D. W. Grove, D.S.O.) and "D" (Major C. U. Blascheck, M.C.), moved off to try to establish a block across the main road north of Kyaukse, near Letpan. Operating near the road a few miles from Letpan on the 16th and 17th, they successfully ambushed several Japanese parties, collecting forty-one bodies. During the Battalion's cross-country march on 17th/18th to join "C" and "D," Lieutenant-Colonel G. H. W. Bond was severely wounded. His death on the 19th was a severe blow to the Battalion. Major F. E. Nangle took over command (as Lieutenant-Colonel) and Major D. W. Grove became 2nd-in-Command.

The Battalion moved away from its first position, which was overlooked by Bilin Hill, after suffering ten casualties from shell fire, but found no targets on the main road. The enemy fugitives appeared to have abandoned this route, and were, in fact, being gradually and relentlessly forced into the foothills east of Kyaukse, and eventually into the Shan States.

But the garrison of Kyaukse fought on, and the 3rd Battalion was switched round to the south on 22nd March to clear the three outlying villages of Puttaing, Panbonit and Kyiestsin. The first was found unoccupied by "B" Company (Major F. T. G. Morcom) when first searched, but the enemy returned overnight and gave the Company an unwelcome reception on its second visit on the 23rd. A M.M.G. burst mortally wounded Major Morcom and killed the Gunner officer with him; and the two platoons involved became pinned. It was thanks to the two British signallers, who carried on in place of their fallen officer and laid on a perfect smoke screen, that the platoons got away as cheaply as they did (one G.O.R. killed and one wounded). Both these Gunner signallers were awarded Military Medals.

Puttaing was found empty the following day. Meanwhile, "A" Company (Major M. H. Kelleher) had killed seven Japs in Panbonit for a loss of two men, and Kyiestsin was occupied unopposed.

The Battalion continued its drive eastwards towards the main road and had one more scrap on the 28th at a small village called Kade, which was carried after a brisk fire-fight at close quarters by "C" Company (Major E. W. Macdonald). No. 16371 Rifleman Marsing Gurung earned a Certificate of Gallantry here for good execution with his Bren gun and for knocking out an enemy L.M.G. when he was the only unwounded man in his section. Thanks to him, and others like him, the Company lost only one killed and eight wounded.

Apart from patrol clashes, which accounted for a few more Japs, there was no more opposition and the Battalion reached Paukon on 30th March. Kyaukse fell the same day, but the 80th Brigade was not concerned in the immediate pursuit, and the 3rd Battalion enjoyed a short rest at Paukon until 12th April. While there, parties went up north to see Mandalay and to visit the 1st Battalion, also resting, at Maymyo. But we must now return to the 4th Battalion at Kohima.

General Sir William Slim summed up the recent operations by General Gracey's 20th Division: "This break-out and advance to Kyaukse were spectacular feats which only a magnificent Division, magnificently led, could have staged after weeks of the heaviest defensive fighting."

THE 4th BATTALION

(Map 29, facing page 268, and Map 30, page 269)

We have seen how the 7th Division was destined for the secret move far to the west, through Gangaw and Pauk, to seize a bridge-head near Pakokku for General Slim's "master stroke."

The cover-plan, deception moves and other arrangements, needed time to mature, however, before the 33rd Brigade were called forward for their opposed river crossing. Gangaw was first taken, early in January, by the Lushai Brigade; then the 28th East African Brigade pushed on towards Pauk and successfully posed as the advanced guard of the 11th East African Division, which had driven the Japanese down the Kabaw Valley. The secret move of the IV Corps was not, indeed, revealed to the enemy until a late stage of the operations we have just described—too late to retrieve disaster.

The 7th Division gradually closed forward but the 33rd Brigade, with the 4th Battalion, did not leave Kohima until 4th January for its M.T. drive of over 350 miles to Gangaw. There the Brigade halted from 22nd to 31st January to do some strenuous training for a river crossing, including handling of assault boats and assembly drill.

The 114th Brigade meanwhile had taken the lead to clear Pauk and Pakokku, and met stiff opposition at the latter.

On 1st February the 4th Battalion left its own Brigade and moved forward by stages to come under command of the 114th Brigade near Pakokku. It moved by slow M.T. column as far as Pauk—necessarily slow, often very slow or stop, owing to the narrow, winding half-made hill road, already congested by forward-moving traffic. At Pauk they were visited by General Sir William Slim (recently knighted near Imphal), General F. W. Messervy (now IV Corps Commander), and General G. C. Evans, who had become 7th Divisional Commander, and felt very much like the Roman gladiators before the Emperor waved them into the arena. But their arena lay beyond the broad river which they had first seen as a silver streak in the distance when they topped the last wooded crests to reach the plains below.

On the evening of the 7th the Battalion relieved 4/5th R.G.R. on a rocky ridge near Kanhla. It remained there until the 11th in a reserve or secure base position while the 4/5th Gurkhas attacked a strong enemy position around Kanhla cross-roads and had some stiff fighting before they captured it.

The Battalion felt strange at first in the new wide open spaces, where defences had to be dug in open fields and camouflage called for greater skill than in the jungle. One company misguidedly left a "tactical gap" in its defences through which sneaked a party of Japs one night to plant a mine and cause some confusion, as no one could tell friend from foe. No harm was done and one good lesson had been learnt. On 12th February the Battalion moved up close to the river near Nangat village, and at last the final plot was disclosed, hitherto only known to the Commanding Officer and two others. There were also further before-battle exhortations from the Corps and Divisional Commanders, and the tension rose sharply as the crucial hour approached.

The main crossing was to be made in the early hours of the 14th at Nyaungu, just north of the ancient Burmese capital of Pagan, where the river was more than a mile wide—in fact, it constituted the longest opposed crossing of the Second World War. On the enemy side the banks rose to bluffs a hundred feet high, beyond which lay flat open paddy fields devoid of cover. Below these bluffs were a few small beaches affording scrambling access to the top and these were to be used for the first footings. It was hoped the enemy would regard these as the least likely landing-places. (*See Plate 10.*)

The first unit to cross was to be a battalion of the South Lancashire Regiment, specially trained for this task. The 4/15th Punjab Regiment was to cross next, and to start forming a bridge-head, closely followed by the 4/1st.

On the night of the crossing, 13th/14th, a strong wind made choppy water for the launchings, but the leading company rowed silently across to gain the first foothold by 0500 hours. The following waves of the South Lancashires had trouble from the start; many of the outboard motors failed or were unable to cope with the current, and most of the loaded craft were still "at sea" when dawn exposed them to heavy fire from the cliff tops. In short, the first company across was still holding on by itself at 0800 hours, so the 33rd Brigade Commander (Brigadier R. G. Collingwood) decided to launch the 4/15th under cover of a massive concentration of fire from the air, artillery and tanks. It was an impressive sight to the 4/1st, anxiously awaiting their turn near the river bank. In an indescribable inferno of shot and shell, of swooping aircraft and shattering explosions, the 4/15th were seen storming the cliffs, and the 4/1st were soon

chugging across the water after them. Some of the boats did not chug as well as others, but most of the Battalion quickly followed " B " Company, led by Major C. D. Nixon, to secure their bridge-head objectives.

During the afternoon the crossing became a procession and the three battalions of the 33rd Brigade were firmly established by nightfall. Expansion of the bridge-head continued. In the face of only minor opposition and sniping, the Battalion moved eastwards to reach the first milestone on the road to Meiktila on the 15th. There forty-three miscreants of the " Indian National Army " came in to surrender and were relieved of the arms they were so reluctant to use. The river front near Pagan was largely defended by the I.N.A., with a stiffening of Japanese, but being under the Twenty-Eighth Japanese Army, whose task was mainly to defend the oilfields to the south, they received little support from either flank. Eastwards, around Palin, however, a Japanese Compound Battalion put up a stiffer resistance, as we shall see. It was fortunate, indeed, that the Japanese were being so successfully diverted by the 20th Division's efforts farther north, which we have already described. The enemy were also misled by the activities of the 114th Brigade, mopping up Pakokku up to 18th February.

The 4th Battalion pressed on, with the help of a few tanks and armoured cars, mopping up as they went. In one scrap, tanks co-operating, Jemadar Bahadur Gurung's platoon killed thirty Japanese for the loss of two killed and one wounded.

The 89th Brigade joined the 33rd on the 16th, and next day the 17th Division began to cross and to prepare for its dash on Meiktila. One of the 7th Division's next tasks was to clear the enemy-held triangle Palin-Taungtha-Myingyan, which seriously threatened the 17th Division's flank.

While the 114th Brigade moved up to relieve the 33rd the 4th Battalion closed in on Palin, to probe and pinpoint the defences, from 19th to 22nd February. Subedar Partapsing Thapa distinguished himself in one very successful probe, in which he unfortunately lost his right eye but carried on until he had disengaged his patrol with the loss of two killed and two wounded. He was awarded an immediate M.C. The Japanese position at Palin formed a regular stronghold on a commanding hill topped by two huge solid pagodas and backed by the Irrawaddy.

Colonel Horsford launched " D " Company (Major P. F. H.

Reeve) at it on 23rd February with a squadron of Sherman tanks in support. An airstrike by Thunderbolts and a heavy artillery pounding were to precede the advance, but the two forward platoons could not restrain themselves at the sight of some Japanese scuttling out of their foremost defences, and dashed forward like greyhounds unleashed. Deaf to the shouts of their senior officers in rear they rushed their first objectives five minutes before they were due to pass the start line. But the Company then ran into the deeply bunkered positions around the pagodas and had to fight fiercely for five hours before these were knocked out one by one. The tanks then proceeded to crush in each bunker as it was taken, so many Japanese must have been entombed. Twenty-four bodies were counted, but General Tanaka (33rd Japanese Division) admitted later to the loss of forty-eight killed.

Our own casualties, after three more days of hunting and mopping up the neighbourhood, amounted to: killed, 1 G.O. and 23 G.O.Rs.; wounded, 1 G.O. and 16 G.O.Rs. Among the many individual feats of gallantry in this action, two were recognized by immediate awards of M.Ms.

The next move was towards Myingyan, the 4th Battalion moving along the riverine road while the rest of the 33rd Brigade closed forward through Kamyé. The Battalion pushed steadily forward, inflicting considerable casualties on its way, but as it began to close in on Myingyan the Brigade was diverted southwards towards Taungtha, leaving the 4/15th Punjab to mask Myingyan. The 17th Division had swept past Taungtha on 24th February, but the Japanese were still strongly entrenched on dominating features near the town, including one at Point 676, which threatened the L. of C. to Meiktila (captured in the first week of March).

The 4th Battalion moved to the Brigade reserve harbour at Kamyé on 6th March but continued its hunt. On the 11th, "A" Company (Major D. A. Truss), with a squadron of tanks, raided an enemy-held village called Kyaukka and wiped out the garrison. Sixty-five bodies were found, and three guns and a heavy mortar were captured, for a loss of two killed and four wounded. Hill 676, south-east of Taungtha, formed the next objective. This had been captured by another unit on 7th March but lost again. It was tackled by "C" Company (Major C. D. Nixon, M.C.) on the 14th with a squadron of tanks (from the Gordons) and the usual air and artillery support. Major P. F. H.

Reeve took " D " Company and another squadron of tanks round the back of the hill to cut off any retreating enemy.

Colonel Horsford wrote, soon after this action :

" The whole battle was a tremendous success, and the men literally ran up on to each objective. One section, having arrived on top of the hill, was met by fire from bunkers on the reverse slope. They ran out of grenades, and spent twenty minutes throwing stones at the Japs! I was in the Tank Regimental Commander's tank, and heard over the wireless a ' Sitrep ' in broad Scotch from the Squadron Commander: ' The little men are on the objective and are stoning the Japs to death.' At the end of the day we counted 32 Jap bodies, two 81-mm. mortars and one British 3-inch mortar, as well as a great deal of other equipment. During the night, Nixon was counter-attacked by 100 Japs after some heavy shelling. He had no casualties, and found another ten bodies in the morning, also one P.O.W."

Meanwhile, the 4/15th Punjabis had been closing in on Myingyan from the south against stubborn enemy resistance, and the 4th Battalion was recalled to help apply the finishing touch.

" A " Company (Major D. H. L. Parker) and " C " Company (Major C. J. Nixon) with tanks in support, forced their way round the north-east of the town, and in two days of close fighting, on the 20th and 21st, they cleared a series of strong-points, including the railway station. The Japanese reacted strongly on the night 21st/22nd and directed the main weight of their attack on a detached platoon of " A " Company under Subedar Lachhiman Thapa, M.C. The tale of the savage scrap which ensued is best told in the words of the "V.C. citation"—another case, like that of Havildar Minbahadur Rana, of the 3rd Battalion, at Sita, of a near-miss posthumous V.C.—for No. 15104 Naik Tejbahadur Thapa:

" On the night 21st/22nd March, 1945, the platoon, in which this N.C.O. was a section commander, was detached from the rest of the Company in a village commanding the eastern approaches to Myingyan, and was attacked by a far superior force of Japs who broke through to the centre of the position. Naik Tejbahadur's section took the main force of the attack, which eventually reached Platoon H.Q. He directed his section's fire backwards on to the enemy, who had forced the position in large numbers. All the grenades in his section were quickly used up; many of the men in his section were wounded, and his Tommy

gun had jammed. Without a thought for his own safety, he threw down his Tommy gun and whipped out his kukri and alone charged through the enemy to Platoon H.Q. to get more grenades. He then fought his way back through the enemy to his section position, hurling grenades as he went. Having issued out all the grenades to his section, he threw his own grenades, and then, taking out his kukri, again charged the enemy single-handed, killing at least one Jap, and fought his way to the L.M.G. position, which had by now ceased firing, as both the Bren gunners had been wounded. He was, however, only able to fire a few bursts, as an enemy grenade thrown at him wounded him in the chest and abdomen. Lying on the ground, and dying from his wounds, he continued to exhort his section and to shout orders until the enemy's attack had finally been beaten off. He was then brought into Platoon H.Q., where he died of his wounds ten minutes later.

“ This Naik's many acts of heroism during the Jap attack, his devotion to duty, and complete and utter disregard for his own safety were an example of courage of the highest order. Through his courage and direction, even while mortally wounded, the attack was finally driven off and a vital position denied to the enemy, which resulted in the final capture of Myingyan the next day.”

Naik Tejbahadur was posthumously awarded the I.O.M.

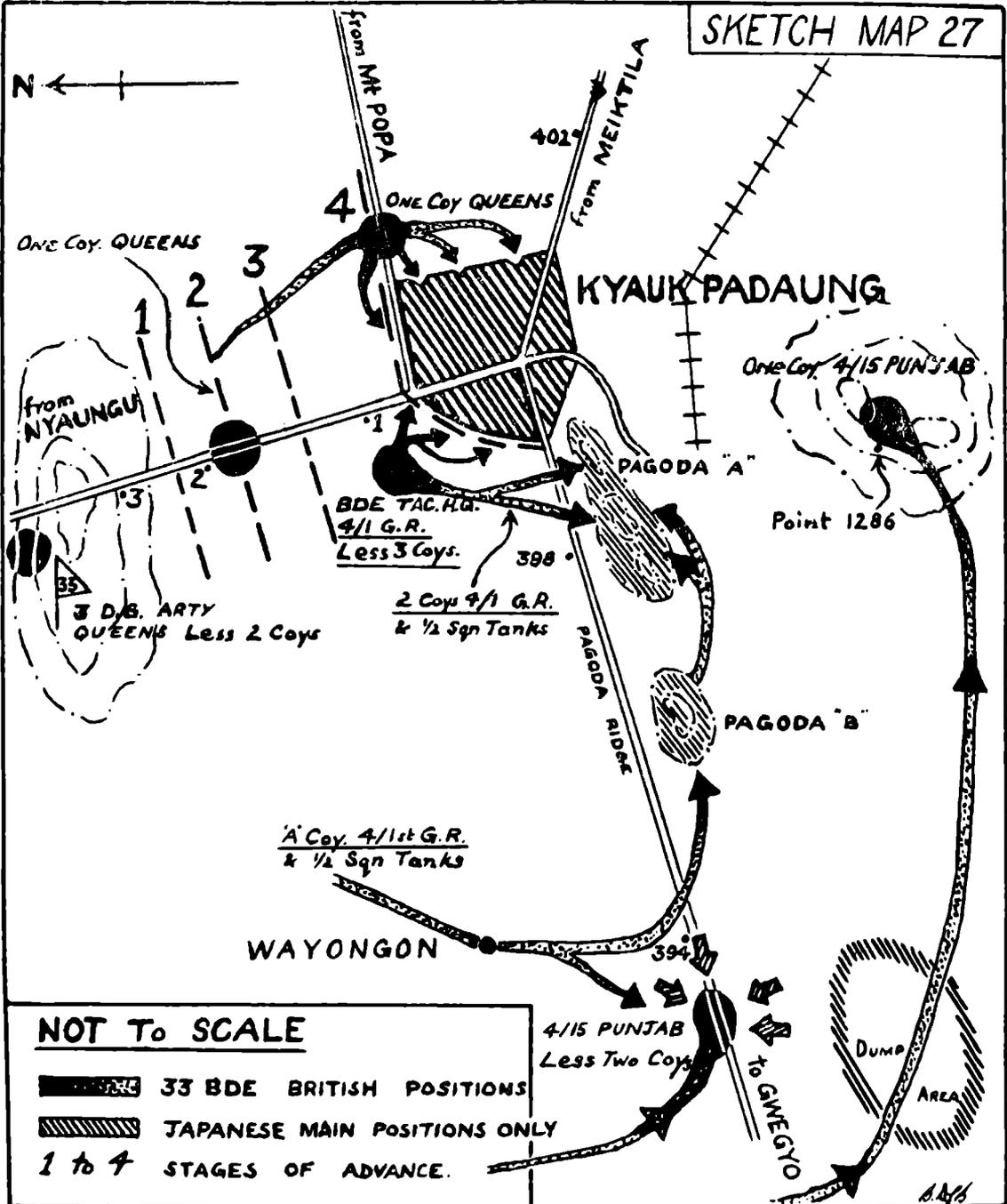
Major D. H. L. Parker was awarded an immediate M.C. for his gallantry and leadership in these last actions.

The last enemy stronghold in the Jail compound had to be pounded by dive-bombers and artillery before a platoon of “ C ” Company could charge into the breach in Peninsular War style.

On the same day (23rd) the 4/15th Punjabis cleared the rest of Myingyan after a series of brilliant actions which had earned them two V.Cs.

The 4th Battalion H.Q. then moved into the Vicarage and made themselves comfortable, but only for three days. On the 26th the Battalion moved off to clear three high hills which overlooked the road north of Taungtha. They were able to infiltrate on to these without loss, and on 6th April went back with the 33rd Brigade to the river near Nyaungu for what was meant to be a fortnight's rest after seven weeks of continuous close contact. (Brigadier L. H. O. Pugh, D.S.O., R.A., had taken over the command of the 33rd Brigade on 28th March, in place of Brigadier R. G. Collingwood.)

SKETCH MAP 27



NOT TO SCALE

-  33 BDE BRITISH POSITIONS
-  JAPANESE MAIN POSITIONS ONLY
- 1 to 4 STAGES OF ADVANCE.

KYAUKPADAUNG BATTLE SKETCH

At Nyaungu the 4th Battalion was very glad to welcome back into the Brigade their old friends the 1st Queen's, who had been withdrawn at Kohima and had been absent for nine months. (The 1st Burma Rifles had efficiently carried on in their place.) The period of rest was cut short on 9th April by a summons to join battle around Kyaukpadaung.

The 7th Division had now come under orders of XXXIII Corps for an advance south astride the Irrawaddy, while the IV Corps mopped up around Mandalay and Meiktila. The 7th Division's first task was to clear Kyaukpadaung and Chauk preparatory to an advance into the area of the Yenangyaung oilfields.

The 20th Division, to which we shall presently return (to pick up the 1st and 3rd Battalions again), was meanwhile to advance through Natmauk to capture Magwe.

KYAUKPADAUNG

(Map 27)

The Japanese were strongly entrenched on the vast conical peak of Mount Popa, around their rail-head and supply centre of Kyaukpadaung, and at Gwegyo. The 7th Divisional plan in outline was as follows:

The 5th Brigade (2nd Division) and 268th Brigade to clear Mount Popa and cover the flank of 33rd Brigade, which was first to take Kyaukpadaung and then turn right on Chauk while the 89th Brigade attacked from the north.

The country over which the 33rd Brigade had to advance consists of a dry, sandy plain intersected by nullahs and in places covered by thorny scrub. Bare and rocky hills rise steeply several hundred feet above the surrounding plain. One such twin eminence, known as Pagoda Ridge (or Pagoda A and Pagoda B), was to be the main objective of the 4th Battalion.

The essence of the 33rd Brigade plan was to reach striking distance before the enemy had time to reinforce his positions. Two night marches concentrated the Brigade, unseen, at Mile 18 on the road north of Kyaukpadaung, behind a screen of the 1st Queen's at Mile 4, by first light on 11th April.

That evening the 4th Battalion moved up behind this screen and patrols passed through to gain contact on the first bound (see Map 27). Early on the 12th the Battalion attacked along

the axis of the road, with " A " Company and a half-squadron of 3rd D.G. tanks, under Major D. H. L. Parker, doing a right swing through Wayongon. 4/15th Punjab had meanwhile moved by night to attack Gwegyo and seize Point 1286, to the south.

The 4th Battalion drove in the Japanese covering positions in front of the town and reached the Mount Popa road by midday. Two companies of the Queen's then came up, the first to relieve the Company east of the town and the second to form a reserve for Colonel Horsford.

It was now decided to " contain " the town while Pagoda ridge was attacked, from the north-east by " C " Company with tank and artillery support, and by " A " Company from the west.

Major D. H. L. Parker, M.C., has graphically described the scene for us:

" Only a photograph could adequately describe the feature that Major C. J. (Chris) Nixon with ' C ' Company was ordered to attack and capture. The landscape reminded one of the fairy tales of Hans Andersen. It was a series of rocky features that had grown out of the surrounding flat country for no apparent reason, each no more than a hundred and fifty feet high, shaped like a horse-shoe, about five hundred yards wide with a small cutting in the middle of the horse-shoe as if a giant had broken it some time and the two halves had fallen slightly apart. Upon each of these rocky summits were typical Burmese temples, some more splendid and higher than others, while within they were honeycombed with passages and hiding-places where the Jap could hide and make a nuisance of himself, until he died of starvation—unless means were found of destroying him quicker."

The Battalion did not arrive within striking distance of the hill until 1400 hours, so Colonel Horsford had to make a very quick plan. This involved tying up the artillery support, including the registration of mediums and 25-pounders, with the moves of the half-squadron of tanks (3rd Dragoon Guards) and the assaulting company, but the attack was well under way inside forty-five minutes.

As " C " Company got within 200 yards of the objective, very heavy firing broke out from its front and M.M.G. fire from the flank. Nixon immediately ordered a charge which, with the close support of the tanks, quickly swept over the summit. Then, seizing the chance of cutting off and destroying the whole enemy garrison, Nixon sent off a platoon, with a troop of tanks, round

the south side of the hill. This force completely surprised thirty Japanese who were trying to hide behind a huge rock, and killed them to a man. Meanwhile Nixon had set about the task of mopping up the main temple area, and doing much of it himself. Major Parker continues:

“ Many Japs with grenades and automatics were still hiding in the catacombs beneath the temples in the rock itself, and able to offer effective resistance. They had to be winkled out or killed before dusk, or they might create havoc under cover of darkness. Fire was directed down the entrances to these underground caves, and Chris himself was dashing from one hole to another, chucking a grenade in there, firing a PIAT here, then a pistol and then a Bren gun. His energy was untiring and his example, both of resourcefulness and courage, so inspired the men working with him that by nightfall the position was finally cleared, the last Japs killed or captured. He never seemed conscious of the fact that, when he dived into an underground passage to chuck a grenade round a corner at the last Japs inside, he was a silhouetted target, and only escaped death by the narrowest of margins. Shots whistled past, and how they failed to find their mark is still a mystery; but it did not deter him from carrying on to the end until the last Jap was accounted for, and for all the notice he took of the Jap fire it might have been beads—not bullets—that were being fired at him.”

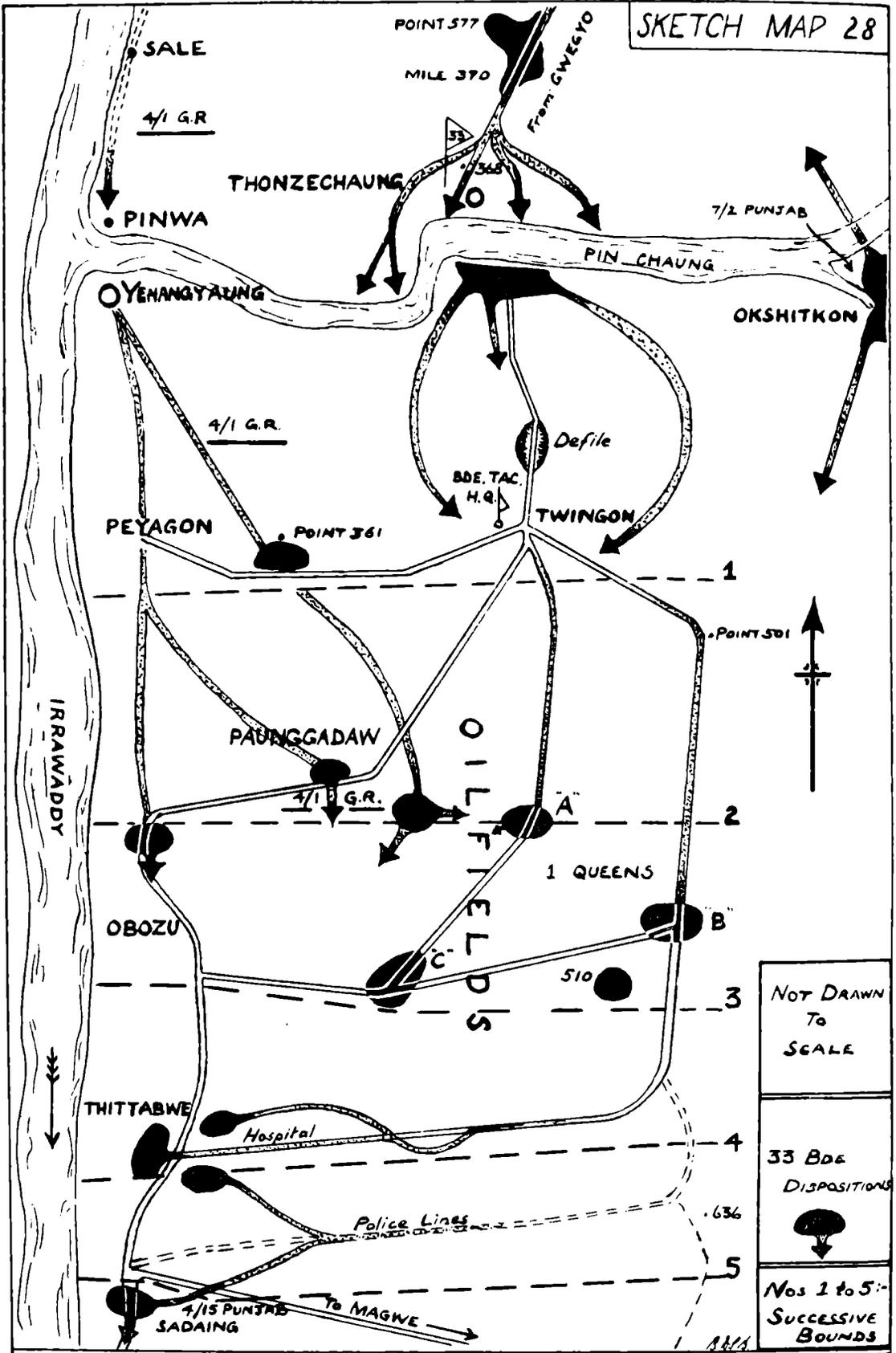
His gallant conduct earned Major Sir C. J. Nixon, Bart., a Military Cross.

Major Parker's own Company (“ A ”) killed nineteen Japanese in the process of capturing Pagoda B, making the total Battalion bag for the day up to fifty-five killed, for the loss of one G.O.R. killed and one wounded.

All companies took part in mopping up the town and surrounding country, forty-six miserable I.N.A. prisoners being rounded up as well as two Japanese. Immense quantities of ammunition, stores and equipment, including a 150-mm. howitzer, were also found abandoned.

Meanwhile, the rest of 33rd Brigade Group cleared Gwegyo and closed in on Chauk from the east as the 89th Brigade approached from the north. The 4th Battalion was then summoned to do an all-night advance, and then a bound-by-bound move across some almost impassably rough country, to reach Chauk on 18th April, only to find the enemy had slipped away, mostly across the river.

SKETCH MAP 28



NOT DRAWN TO SCALE

33 BDE DISPOSITIONS

Nos 1 to 5: SUCCESSIVE BOUNDS

BATTLE SKETCH AREA
YENANGYAUNG OILFIELD

YENANGYAUNG OILFIELD

(Map 28)

From Chauk the 33rd Brigade Group immediately turned south to tackle the oilfield area around Yenangyaung, which the Japanese appeared to have converted into an elaborate defensive zone six miles deep and four miles wide. This area is surrounded by bare rugged hills on three sides, with the Irrawaddy on the fourth. Within this rectangle lies a labyrinth of ravines and twisting roads, and everywhere innumerable derricks and pylons thrust skywards like a naked forest. The area at the time was also littered with smashed buildings and installations.

On the assumption that the Japanese would fully man and stubbornly defend this zone it was at first thought that the whole 7th Division would have to be deployed against it, with possibly the assistance of another division as well. Fortunately, it proved to be more strictly "defensive" than "defended" in the hitherto Japanese sense of that term. We shall now see how the 33rd Brigade Group transformed their task of probing into an all-out drive which cleared the oilfield in three days.

A glance at Map 28 will show how the 4th Battalion fitted into the Brigade plan and its execution.

Moving first by M.T. and then marching through the rugged cross-grain of the river bank, it reached Pinwa on the evening of 20th April. That night a company infiltrated across the Pin Chaung to secure the first bound at Point 361. On the morning of the 21st the Battalion advanced on a three-company front, and after a stiff scrap at Paunggadaw, in which eleven Japanese were killed, it consolidated on the second bound, in contact with the Queen's on the east. In the process of hunting the enemy out of their dug-outs, about 200 were seen to collect near the steamer jetty at Obozu and were very effectively engaged by 25-pounders in support.

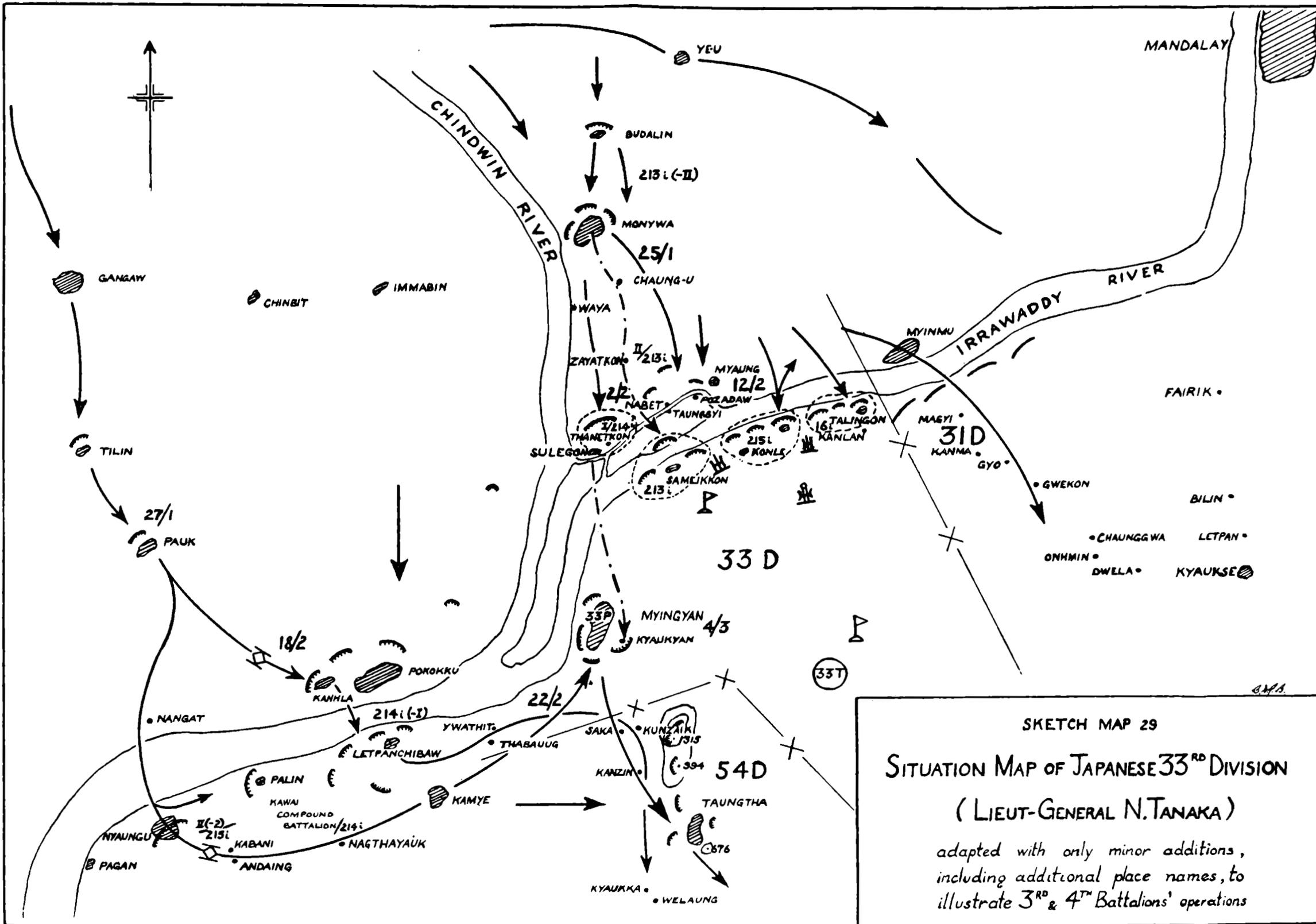
At first light on the 22nd the 4th Battalion drove southwards while the other two battalions acted as "stops." The area was divided into a series of short bounds, about 300 yards apart, which were cleared with the help of tanks, while the artillery shelled the next bound to harass the enemy and mark the progress of the drive to the "stops."

By midday the Battalion made contact with 4/15th Punjab at Thittabwe and all that remained was the systematic mopping-up of the whole area, which went on for another two days.

In thirteen days from its start at Nyaungu, the Brigade Group had covered 120 miles, fought three stiff actions (apart from the oilfield drive) and inflicted heavy casualties at small cost—all in the intense heat of mid-April in the “dry belt.”

The 4th Battalion's score amounted to: Japanese killed, 84, wounded, 18, and captured, 2 (plus 54 of the I.N.A.), for the loss of 3 G.O.Rs. killed and 2 wounded.

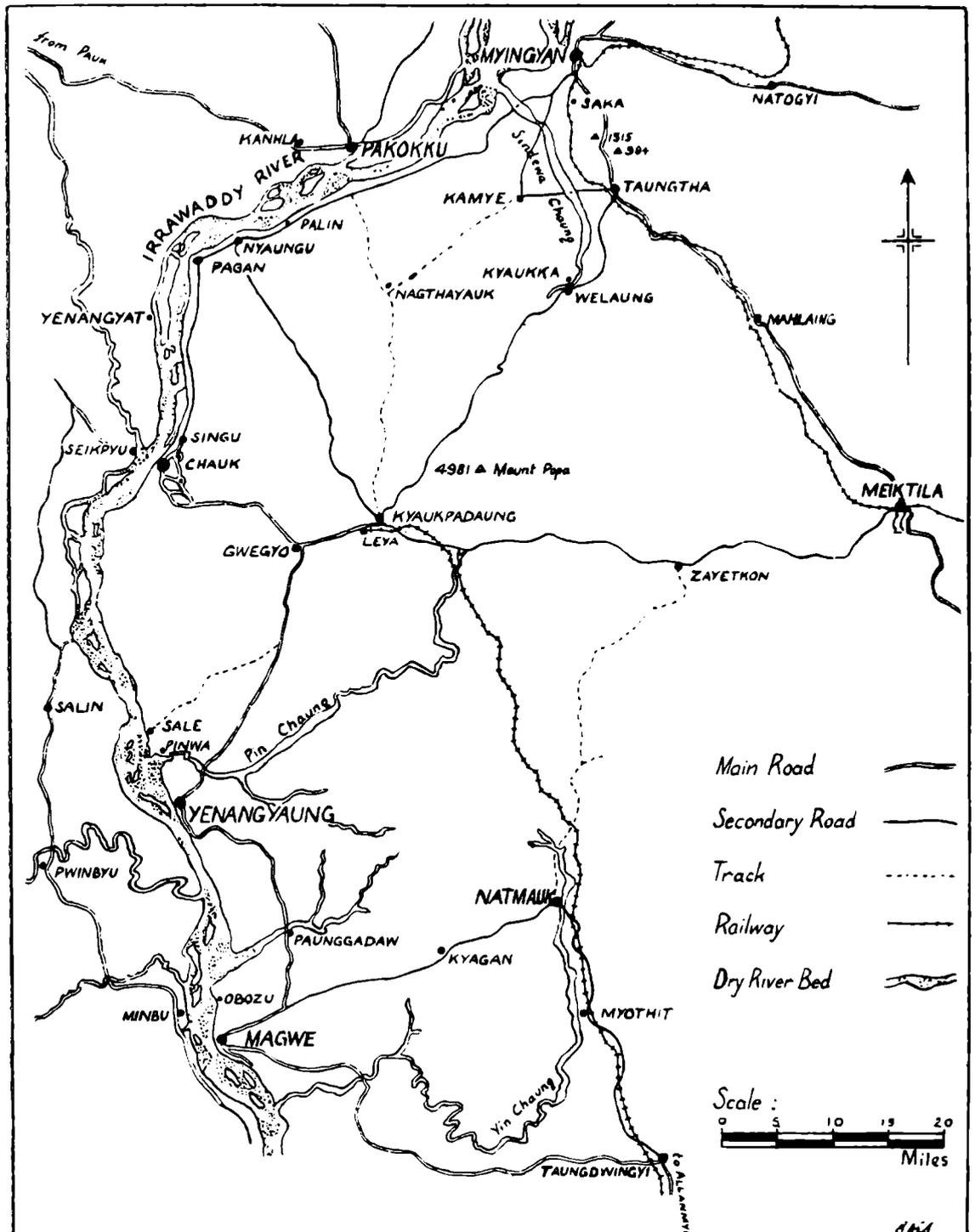
The Battalion spent the rest of April in the Burma Oil Company's comfortable quarters, where the electricity, gas, and water sanitation systems were still in working order—luxuries undreamt of for over two years. It then enjoyed another restful week at Magwe before it joined the 20th Division, which had swept on from Magwe while the oilfield battle was starting. But we must leave the 4th Battalion at this point to follow the events which brought the 1st, 3rd and 4th Battalions into the same, 20th, Division's operations far to the south.



SKETCH MAP 29
SITUATION MAP OF JAPANESE 33RD DIVISION

(LIEUT-GENERAL N. TANAKA)

adapted with only minor additions,
including additional place names, to
illustrate 3RD & 4TH Battalions' operations



SKETCH MAP 30
MYINGYAN - MEIKTILA - MAGWE

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

DOWN THE IRRAWADDY

(Map 31, facing page 278)

WE have now followed the fortunes of the three Battalions up to the three separate points where they came to rest in Central Burma, at much the same time, in April, 1945. Our next task is to bring them all more or less into line lower down the Irrawaddy.

We shall not attempt to sort out the complicated pattern of criss-cross moves—General Slim's "Union Jack manœuvre"—in which the Fourteenth Army regrouped itself for the advance towards Rangoon. Briefly, the 5th and 17th Divisions of IV Corps were to start their all-out "Race to Rangoon" early in April, leap-frogging each other down the "Railway Axis." It was to be an obstacle race against Japs and the monsoon, and although the Japs disputed every bound, it was the monsoon which won in the end. Sea-borne troops occupied Rangoon on 3rd May, when the 17th Division had become bogged only forty miles to the north.

This may help to give perspective to the Irrawaddy River operations about to be considered. There XXXIII Corps was to continue its drive, with 7th Division (less the 33rd Brigade at Magwe) on the west bank and the 20th Division (General Gracey) pushing far southwards to Prome and beyond. While the 7th Division mopped up the remnants of the Japanese oilfields army, the 20th was also to form a stop-line across the escape routes of the Japanese Arakan forces.

Fortunately for us the three jig-saw pieces with which we are now concerned will quickly find their places in the same part of the puzzle—roughly between Allanmyo and Prome—for most of May. The 4th Battalion was then to be under General Gracey's command for a time, as well as the 1st and 3rd Battalions.

We can appropriately start with the 1st Battalion, which set

off to join the 20th Division from farthest north at Maymyo, on 18th April, on a course which took it south-west of Meiktila, through Natmauk, to Taungdwingyi by the 20th. Two days later it moved south and joined the 32nd Brigade in some cross-country sweeps which led to several clashes (losses: two killed, one wounded). On the 25th it joined the 100th Brigade mechanized column for its dash on Prome. This Brigade was commanded by the redoubtable Brigadier C. H. B. Rodham, D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C., and the other two battalions were the 14/13th Frontier Force Rifles and 4/10th Gurkhas. Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Jarvis wrote: "We could not have asked for any better."

The 100th Brigade column moved in three Groups, each based on a battalion with supporting arms. The leading, or Group "A," included the armour, the 3 D.G. (Carabiniers) and 11th Cavalry in turn, and these usually carried one close-support company actually mounted on their tanks.

The 1st Battalion started off, however, with Group "C," and on arrival at Gwegyo on 27th April dropped "A" Company, under Major P. A. O. Graham, to search for a party of fifty Japanese reported by local villagers to be in the area west of the main road. "A" Company searched vainly up to a late hour the same night, but after the Battalion had moved on towards Allanmyo next morning another report placed the enemy party at Taukma, two and a half miles westwards. Major Graham led his company out at once, took the enemy completely by surprise, and killed fifty-four of them (counted dead) for a loss of one killed and four wounded. For their gallant conduct in this operation—the Battalion's first big kill—Major Graham and Subedar Aibar Thapa were awarded M.Cs.

The Battalion, meanwhile, had harboured two miles north of Allanmyo, where it had its first view of the Irrawaddy, though this was familiar enough to most of the 20th Division. "A" Company drove in triumphantly on the 29th, waving their captured flags, swords and other weapons, to the unconcealed envy of the other companies whose turn had yet to come.

The Battalion moved up the same day into Group "B" and harboured at Ingon, six miles south of Allanmyo. The road southwards from there gradually approaches the Irrawaddy east bank to traverse a tangled hilly tract. Between Pyalo, near M.S., or Milestone, 207 (from Rangoon) and M.S. 204 the road winds through a narrow defile with the river on the west and a

hilly mass, topped by Point 717, on the east. It was there that the enemy was expected to fight a stubborn rear-guard action.

The leading Group, "A" (11th Cavalry and 14/13th Frontier Force Rifles) was slowed down by demolitions and Japanese rear parties before occupying Pyalo on 30th April. The same afternoon the 1st Battalion was ordered to make a wide flanking move that night to cut the enemy's line of retreat. This entailed making a twelve-mile circuit from near Pyalo, over completely strange and unseen country, and across the grain of the serried ridges eastwards of Point 717 itself.

The Battalion had to help manhandle the loads of the attached Jat company of M.M.Gs., and the artillery F.O.O. wireless sets, as the country was impassable for carriers or jeeps. The pace of the march had, therefore, to be adjusted to that of heavily laden porters over very broken ground. Apart from a two-hour halt to await moonrise before tackling the worst hilly tract, the column had been on the move for twelve hours when it arrived close to Point 717 at 0530 hours (first light) on 1st May.

One company quickly occupied the summit and two others closed the southern end of the defile near M.S. 204. The enemy was taken completely by surprise and a counter-attack was broken up, leaving eighteen bodies on the ground. Then Stuart tanks of 11th Cavalry appeared from the north, in the van of Group "A," and with their help sixty more Japanese were killed. The Battalion's casualties were only two killed and seven wounded—a good example of "sweat saves blood," as a Battalion Newsletter remarks.

The road through Dayindabo and on to Prome was then clear. The Battalion rode through Prome on 3rd May, partly on armoured vehicles and partly ferried by the Gunners, and reached Shangan, sixteen miles south of Prome, on the 4th. Shangan was to be its base for a fortnight of patrolling and long-range sweeps before it moved down to the Irrawaddy and beyond. But we can appropriately leave the Battalion there and return north to pick up the other battalions in turn.

The 3rd Battalion had moved, with the 80th Brigade, from their rest area near Kyaukse on 11th April, and had driven through Natmauk to clear Magwe by the 19th. There the Brigade formed a southern stop-line for the 33rd Brigade's oilfield drive. After intercepting a number of Japanese fugitives it became clear that most of the oilfield garrison, or its remnants, had escaped westwards across the river. The 80th Brigade then

became a marching column which left on 22nd April to sweep the east bank of the river up to Allanmyo, fifty miles to the south. More Japanese were killed and more of the I.N.A. were captured, but the 3rd Battalion itself had only one stiff scrap, at Kanhla on the 29th, when it killed twelve and captured an officer's sword, at no cost to itself. In the first few days of May it moved on to take over a stretch of the road, from Dayindabo up to seven miles north of it, and started probing eastwards. Contact was soon gained with a strong enemy group near Sitsaba. "A" Company (Major M. H. Kelleher) ran into stiff opposition when advancing farther east on 9th May, suffering the sad loss of Lieutenant B. J. Crosley, killed by M.M.G. fire, before it was withdrawn to harbour in Sitsaba.

Next day "A" Company found that the Japanese had fallen back to another strong position farther east, so "D" Company (Major C. U. Blascheck, M.C.) came up to Sitsaba to do a night march round the enemy's flank. Advancing early on 11th May, "D" Company very soon became involved in close fighting in which it beat off successive counter-attacks throughout the morning and inflicted heavy casualties. While these were in progress Lieutenant-Colonel F. E. Nangle received orders to move off with the rest of the Battalion and all the guns to Prome, so was unable to meet the request for reinforcement and artillery help. The Sitsaba detachment was surprised to hear that it had come under orders of its 4th Battalion, which had now come forward ahead of its brigade.

So, rather belatedly, we can bring the 4th Battalion into the picture, too. It left its comfortable quarters at Yenangyaung on 29th April and started to settle down for an expected rest at Magwe, when it was summoned forward to reinforce the 20th Division.

The Battalion arrived at Dayindabo on 9th May to come under orders of the 80th Brigade, with two companies detached—"B" at Pyalo, "D" on the river west of Dayindabo—and all immediately occupied in the Jap hunt. Only a few of the 3rd and 4th Battalions thus had a chance to get together before the H.Q. half of the 3rd Battalion moved on two days later, as already described. "A" Company, under Captain D. H. L. Parker, M.C., left with a mechanical column on the 11th to do a long-range circuit during which it killed twelve Japanese near Shwebandaw, thirty miles east of Allanmyo. It returned on the 14th.

Major C. D. Nixon went out to Sitsaba to take control as soon

as he heard of the situation there, but found that " D " Company (3/1st) was holding its own and hitting back despite the absence of artillery support. A mountain battery came up during the afternoon, and with further support available next day, " D " Company successfully advanced eastwards and cleared the whole of the recent battlefield, finding forty dead Japanese and many blood trails.

On 13th May a detachment under Lieutenant R. S. R. Carr accounted for nineteen Japanese dead at Gwegyo, five miles east of Point 717, but on the 14th the Battalion had to turn its attention to the west to meet a new and more serious threat.

The remnants of the Japanese Arakan forces were collecting on the west bank of the Irrawaddy near Kama, and although pressed from the north by troops under the 7th Division, they had formed a bridge-head on the east bank of the river and north of the village of Zalon (eight miles north of Prome). Their only hope of escape was to break through the 20th Division to reach the broken, hilly tracts of the Pegu Yomas to the east.

The 33rd Brigade (now under Brigadier J. S. Vickers) was hurrying down from the north to close in on the bridge-head and place a cordon round it. Its plan was to form a close inner cordon around the Zalon area, with 4/15th Punjab on the north, 4/1st on the east, and 1st Queen's on the south. An outer cordon was also to be formed by other units farther to the east, but the 4th Battalion, with its attached companies, had to start closing in towards Zalon on the 14th, six days before the rest of the 33rd Brigade came into line.

Majors M. H. Kelleher and C. U. Blascheck, M.C., with their two 3rd Battalion companies (" A " and " D "), took a leading part during the first few days and gained positions only a mile from Zalon by the 17th. On that day Lieutenant C. S. Rae, of " C " Company, 4th Battalion, which was moving up in support, was killed on patrol while most gallantly trying to bring in one of his men lying wounded in the open. A platoon of the 3rd Battalion made three determined efforts to rescue the wounded man, but found the enemy far too strong and alert. The early progress towards Zalon is described in a Newsletter: " The Japs could not have chosen a better place, as the surrounding country is dense, hilly jungle about ten miles deep from road to river. The Battalion started to push on towards the crossing-place. It was impossible to get tanks or artillery off the narrow tracks, but we managed to make a jeep road eight miles long which became the

main supply line. Battalion H.Q. were established at road-head and companies pushed out from there to occupy the main tracks and hills on the routes from the crossing-place. We suffered several casualties during the first few days, mostly among the leading scouts."

On the 18th the two 3rd Battalion companies were recalled to the main road near M.S. 192, and on the 20th they drove south to rejoin the rest of their Battalion, then on the move to Taikkyi, fifty miles north of Rangoon. The rest of the 4th Battalion now "marched to the sound of the guns" near Zalon, but as the decisive phase was yet to come, after the 33rd Brigade had fully deployed on 20th May, we may leave the scene for a while to fill in the progress of the other, or H.Q., half of the 3rd Battalion.

This had moved about fifty miles southwards on 11th May to Nattalin, and thence ten miles south-west to Kontha, where, in a role of active flanking protection, the companies searched a wide area with a squadron of 11th Cavalry armoured cars in support. Raids and ambushes claimed a number of kills, but the Japanese were very elusive, and at the end of ten days the hunt was called off for the Battalion to be reunited on 21st May at Taikkyi, to which we shall return later.

Back near Zalon the 4th Battalion continued to close in on the river with the other units of the Brigade now on its flanks. The enemy became more and more aggressive from the 22nd May onwards as their troops collected from the west bank. Nevertheless, "D" Company successfully infiltrated behind the enemy's front, north of Zalon, on the 23rd, and killed twelve in two successful ambushes. "C" Company then came up and carried on to capture a bunkered hill held by forty Japanese, and did execution with thirty more in a nullah near by. "A," "C" and "D" Companies all became closely engaged north of Zalon, and another bunker was captured by a platoon of "D" on 25th May. Havildar Dhankaji Gurung was wounded in this attack and was awarded an immediate I.D.S.M. for his conduct.

A suspicious lull followed, but on the night 26th/27th one company had to repel a fierce attack. Next day the Battalion drew back its positions to link up more closely with the flank units and to be ready for the inevitable flood-tide. The Japanese were seen marking out escape routes with white paper, and when the coast was clear these were altered to lead to areas where a hot reception was prepared. The climax came on the night of the 27th/28th, when a large force of at least 2,000 started to

break out, some in columns of about 200 each and others in parties dribbling through the thick jungle. The Battalion Newsletter continues: "The Brigade was very thin on the ground, our own area being five miles wide and six miles deep; so in order to cover all the tracks, we were sitting in platoon boxes. When, therefore, a position was bumped by a Jap column, the garrison was hard put to avoid being overrun. Although nine platoon positions were attacked during the night, none was taken and no casualties were suffered. Next day fifty-six bodies were counted in front of our positions, and in addition forty-eight enemy stretcher cases were found to have been shot by their own men. Six prisoners were taken, as well as twenty-eight of the I.N.A. We ourselves suffered only nine killed and twenty-three wounded during the whole battle."

In the whole Brigade area 1,396 Japanese bodies were counted and seventy-four prisoners were taken. Several hundred had managed to break through gaps in the thinly held cordons and into the Pegu Yomas to the east, but they were only much depleted and shaken remnants, and even these were not yet "out of the wood." The 4th Battalion's next move, following a few days in an area ten miles east of M.S. 192, took it fifty miles south to Paungde on 6th June. From there it immediately plunged eastwards into the Pegu Yomas to head off and hunt down the fugitives who were reported to be straggling southwards parallel to the road.

The Battalion arrived in good time and established a forward base at Sinzwe (twenty-four miles by mule track from a branch road-head) three days before any Japanese appeared. From Sinzwe, which itself commanded a north-south track, plots were laid on for suitable stops, ambushes and raids. The first enemy party appeared on 14th June and contributed twenty-two bodies to a bag which mounted, during the ten days of good hunting, to 193 all told, at a cost of only one G.O.R. wounded.

As these figures indicate, the Japanese had become quite demoralized, and their one idea, when shooting started, was to run away as fast as possible, leaving behind their dead, stores and transport—usually impressed bullock-carts. After ten days the stragglers gave up this "escape" route and took to the even more difficult trackless jungle farther north, where few can have survived.

After a quiet week in Paungde, the 4th Battalion moved on 5th July to what were intended to be its monsoon quarters near

Hlegu, about thirty miles along the road from Rangoon to Pegu. But three days later it was on the move again for a month of muddy warfare on the Sittang River north-east of Pegu. We shall not follow it into the Sittang swamps just yet, however, but return to the Irrawaddy front south of Prome, where we have abandoned the 1st Battalion for too long already.

THE 1ST BATTALION AND "JARCOL"

Soon after its arrival at Shangon, on 4th May, three companies moved out to search a wide area between the road and river, but no contacts were made during the first week. The Battalion was warned on 7th May to be prepared to organize itself as a river-borne expeditionary force, to be known as "Jarcol," for the capture of Bassein.

"D" Company moved down to the river near Port Neale, and the collection of country boats was put in hand. "Jarcol" was to include a mountain battery and various small administrative units and, imposingly enough, was to have a Naval escort of H.M. Gunboats *Pamela* and *Una*—built by Fourteenth Army and named after the Supremo's and General Slim's daughters.

While preparations went forward for assembling this "fleet" by the 20th, the outlying companies began to find their quarry. On the 11th "C" Company located a party of enemy near Shangon and moved in to the kill with a troop of armoured cars. Sixty-two Japanese were killed, including four officers, and a considerable quantity of arms and equipment was found abandoned. Our losses were four wounded, including Jemadar Chamu Thapa, who died that night. Another patrol near the river killed five for one of its own killed.

On the 12th "D" Company reported numbers of Japanese crossing the river as if to form an escape bridge-head, but they gave up the attempt when engaged by tanks and mortars next morning, losing several of their river craft. The enemy probably sheered off northwards to join in the scramble at the Zalon bridge-head. "A" Company and armoured cars brought off a successful kill at Kugyi the same day, collecting thirty-one bodies and many weapons.

The "Jarcol" fleet assembled at Port Neale on 20th May, and in anticipation of sailing orders for the south, it crossed the river on the 24th, but the Bassein operation was postponed next day on account of the Zalon threat farther north and was finally cancelled

on the 31st. In the meantime, the country had been thoroughly combed as far as Okshitpin, but only a few tired stragglers were rounded up.

The Battalion reassembled on the east bank on 3rd June, and two days later it joined the 100th Brigade's long southerly move to Letpadan. This move completed the 20th Division's final operational deployment along nearly a hundred miles of the road northward from Rangoon.

During the rest of the war period, up to VJ Day on 15th August and beyond, the two Battalions, with the 20th Division, remained based—subject to various alarms and excursions—where we have now placed them.

To help ourselves, as much as our bewildered readers, in this game of "General Post" and free-for-all scrapping, we must recapitulate here.

The 1st Battalion was centred first on Letpadan and then on Othegon, a few miles farther south, in the northern (100th Brigade) sector, with an area including the branch railway line to Henzada on the Irrawaddy. It covered many miles hunting down elusive stragglers or dacoits both on the river bank and deep into the Pegu Yomas. By early August the last Japanese fugitives had made off to run the gauntlet again in the 17th Divisional area around Pegu. Just before VJ Day the Battalion was warned for an early move, with the 20th Division, to French Indo-China, but this was eventually postponed until the final fly-out of the Battalion to Saigon, on 12th/13th September. There we shall leave them, in the air. The 1st Battalion's casualties in Burma amounted to: killed, 1 G.O. and 26 G.O.Rs.; wounded 3 G.Os. and 38 G.O.Rs.

The 3rd Battalion's base and monsoon quarters from 21st May onwards were at Taikkyi, fifty miles north of Rangoon, in the 80th Brigade sector. Again the Battalion was split up, with two companies detached to guard the Rangoon water-supply system. The H.Q. camp was attacked on the night 19th/20th June by a party of about fifty Japanese who were not driven off until we had suffered two killed and six wounded (including one G.O.). A detached platoon was similarly attacked a few days later, but held its own without loss. There were no further clashes, and the only diversions were provided by dacoit hunts with the Civil Police. Lieutenant-Colonel H. G. J. Purcell took over command when Lieutenant-Colonel F. E. Nangle departed on 22nd July, and two months later he flew off, a week ahead of the Battalion itself, to French Indo-China. We shall also leave the

SKETCH MAP 31

LOWER IRRAWADDY

SCALE :

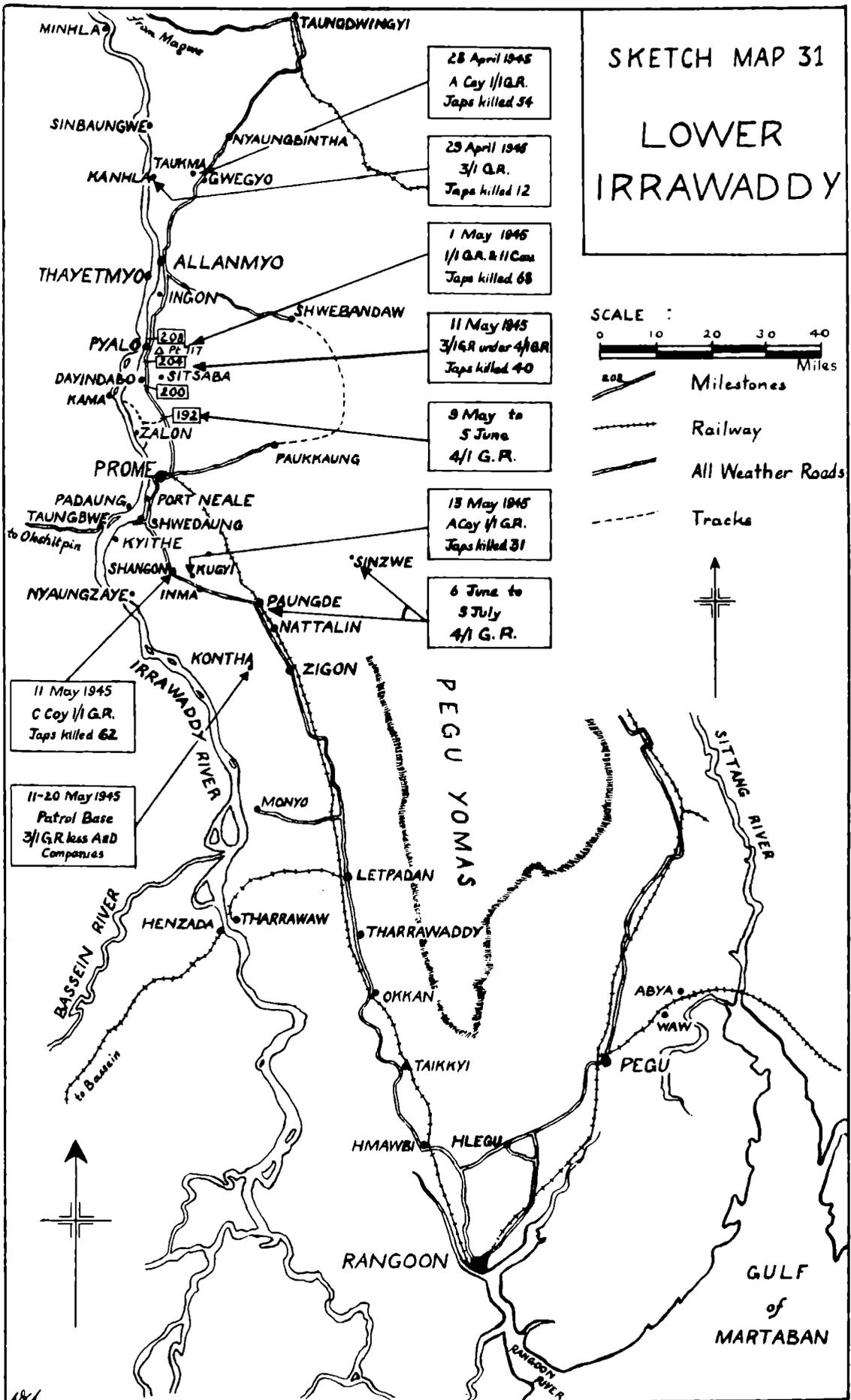


Milestones

Railway

All Weather Roads

Tracks



3rd Battalion in the air, bound for Saigon on 24th September, 1945, and return to both the 1st and 3rd Battalions there in the next chapter.

The 3rd Battalion's casualties during the 1945 campaign in Burma amounted to: killed, 3 B.Os., 1 G.O. and 60 G.O.Rs.; wounded 6 B.Os., 5 G.Os., and 172 G.O.Rs.; also 1 G.O.R. missing, presumed killed.

It could confidently claim 900 Japanese dead (mostly bodies counted) in addition to the 800 admitted by the Japanese at Scraggy (May, 1944), during the two campaigns of 1944 and 1945. It also acquired a mass of trophies, including guns and machine guns of all kinds, and twenty-two swords.

Additional awards, not already mentioned, included the M.C. for Captain E. B. Naug, I.A.M.C., the attached Medical Officer whose exploits have been frequently mentioned, and an I.D.S.M. and four M.Ms., as well as a number of Gallantry Certificates.

THE 4TH BATTALION ON THE SITTANG

(*Map 32, page 283*)

We now return to the 4th Battalion's share in the final phase of the war in Burma.

At the end of June the 7th Division had taken over the southern sector of the IV Corps stop-line along the Sittang River, with the 89th Brigade holding the U-bend east of Waw. This lay astride one of the main avenues of escape for the remnants of the Japanese forces in the Pegu Yomas and was the scene of heavy fighting early in July. It was an indescribable scene of flooded paddy fields and swamps, fed by the incessant monsoon downpours. Gurkhas were particularly handicapped by their lack of inches in the waist-deep floods, as a IV Corps report has mentioned, but they soon proved as good amphibians as the Japanese, and better. (*Plate 12.*)

The 33rd Brigade moved up to relieve the 89th on 10th July, and the 4th Battalion found itself at Abya, on the northern flank of the Brigade, with the task of dominating the area by offensive patrolling. The enemy in front were no longer the old defeated remnants, but fresh troops brought up to hold a monsoon line, and with plenty of artillery in support. They were superior in strength along the 33rd Brigade front and had already proved themselves to be tough and aggressive.

The Battalion's own artillery support was limited to one 7.2 howitzer until 1st August, when a battery of 25-pounders was

brought up within range. The only line of communication was by a single railway track and embankment along which the Battalion was supplied by a jeep-drawn ration train. This was usually given a hot reception by the Japanese guns.

The Battalion set to work at once to make its Abya island "box" into a strong redoubt with sandbagged breastworks. The water level lay only just below the surface, except along the raised embankment, and there was no cover from shell fire in the flimsy village houses above ground. Refuge could be sought only in the water-logged ditches which served for slit-trenches.

While the companies were detached to patrol bases, from which to wade out and explore, half the village was razed to clear the foreground, and supplies were dumped against a possible—or even probable—week's siege. Inevitably the "island fortress" proved to be a favourite target for the Japanese gunners, who diabolically plotted their harassing fire in sporadic bursts to keep the garrison wearily on the move from above-ground bivouacs to under-water ditches and back again.

During the first week of exploration enemy parties were located as far westward as Kinmungan and Kayinzu. One party at Laya railway station (only a platform and signal, in fact) was engaged by mortars brought up in a jeep-drawn box car, but others were made targets for airstrikes. These had to take the place of artillery (until after the 1st August) and they were always most liberally and accurately applied whenever demanded.

On 17th July the Battalion sadly bade farewell to Lieutenant-Colonel D. G. T. Horsford, who had won two D.S.Os. for his outstanding leadership of the Battalion at Kohima and in Central Burma. He had well earned the leave for which he was summoned to India pending promotion to a higher appointment. Major C. D. Nixon, M.C., assumed command until Lieutenant-Colonel A. G. Hiatt arrived on 27th August on transfer from the 5th Battalion.

Major W. G. Hughes showed how to exploit the very accurate support which the R.A.F. always gave, in a most successful raid by "B" Company on 20th July. Having driven the enemy out of Kyaukpon (in the north-east corner of Map 32) where three dead and two wounded Japs were found, he located the enemy in a small village to the south and launched two platoons at it under cover of an airstrike. The R.A.F. Spitfire pilots responded magnificently and, guided by the air-recognition strips (which were merely towels on this occasion), the pilots continued their

deadly dives until the foremost troops were within ten yards of the enemy. Even then they continued to make dummy dives which effectively kept the enemy's heads down.

Nine enemy were quickly accounted for and eleven more were found killed by the Spitfires. It is pleasant to record that the Battalion later got in touch with this 502 Squadron, R.A.F., and held a party in its honour. This was but a small return for the superb support which this Squadron provided on this and many other occasions—and for the cigarettes which the pilots often dropped before they flew off.

After a week of smaller clashes the enemy moved up offensively on the 29th, and a platoon of " B " Company had to evacuate its outpost position in Sathwagyon village. During the last night of July the enemy worked round " B " Company's base on the railway and dug in on the embankment behind.

Repeated attempts by " B " Company to work down the exposed defile of the embankment, which was also raked by M.M.Gs. from the north, proved suicidal. " C " Company, under Major B. F. L. Rooney, put in an attack on the afternoon of 2nd August, moving first southward from Abya, but found it impossible to cross a wide expanse of waist-deep paddy fields which were swept by fire. Artillery mortars had been brought up to supplement those of the Battalion, but they could not pin-point the well-hidden enemy strong-points. After dark, Major Rooney got through to " B " Company with supplies and removed nine casualties. Next day the enemy were found to have withdrawn (leaving traces of blood) to Sathwagyon and positions down the railway line to the east.

Major Rooney then took over the forward base with " C " Company, and carried on the aggressive tactics so ably initiated by Major Hughes, whose conduct throughout these fluid operations was rewarded by a M.C.

The Battalion was relieved by 1/10th Gurkhas on 10th August, and went back by M.T. next day to rest and refit in a jungle camp by the roadside, forty-two miles from Rangoon. The " score " for this last month of fighting was twenty-seven Japanese bodies, plus six wounded, for a loss of twelve killed and nineteen wounded. The Battalion's rest came none too soon: many of the men were suffering from being permanently wet to the skin, when not actually immersed. Skin complaints and fevers had become almost epidemic. It was with some chagrin, however, that the Battalion heard how, only a few days after they had left, their

successors had the pleasure of accepting the surrender of their recent foes—and of collecting their swords and banners.

VJ Day came as quite a shock to most of the Battalion, who had expected, indeed hoped, to go on hunting Japanese almost indefinitely. They were in fact called out during September for two wild-goose chases after Japanese bands still vaguely reported to be at large.

Total casualties during the 1945 campaign in Burma had amounted to: killed, 1 B.O., 1 G.O. and 64 G.O.Rs.; wounded, 5 G.Os. and 98 G.O.Rs.

Its "bag" of Japanese dead during both 1944 and 1945 exceeded 800 almost certain kills, with many more probables.

In addition to the officers' awards, mentioned in the text, the 1945 campaign brought the Battalion three I.D.S.Ms., fifteen M.Ms. and one bar to the M.M.

Even before VJ Day repatriation began to claim some of the Battalion's stoutest leaders. The Nixon brothers left one after the other and were keenly missed by all ranks. But there were old campaigners to take their places for the next adventure of a different kind. The Battalion moved to Mingaladon, fifteen miles from Rangoon, on 10th October, celebrated Dushera there in happy abandon, and flew off on the 20th and 21st to Bangkok, in Siam. The 1st and 3rd Battalions had preceded them during the previous month, but had flown on to Saigon, where we must hasten to deplane them in the next chapter.

We shall return to the 4th Battalion in Siam after we have finished with the other two Battalions farther east.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE AFTERMATH IN THE FAR EAST

FRENCH INDO-CHINA

(Map 33, page 290)

THE 1st and 3rd Battalions had already travelled far with General Gracey's 20th Indian Division in Burma. In mid-September, 1945, a month after VJ Day, they flew off in turn from near Rangoon, as units of the same Division, bound for French Indo-China. General Gracey was made responsible for French Indo-China (south of the 16th parallel) and was entrusted with two main tasks; to collect and disarm about 75,000 Japanese troops of all three services, and to maintain law and order until French troops arrived in sufficient numbers to assume control.

The first appeared to be the more formidable task, but in the event it was to prove far less troublesome than the second. The Annamite, or Viet-Minh, Independence Movement had already assumed a militant form, and its extremist sections were mobilizing for guerilla warfare, when the first of our troops arrived at Saigon in the middle of September. These included the leading group of the 1st Battalion, which, together with the advanced party of the Control Commission, deplaned at Saigon on 13th September, 1945.

Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Jarvis's group, under 400 in strength, immediately became responsible for providing guards and batmen (seventy in number) for the members of the Commission, and also numerous other guards over vulnerable points throughout the City. The second airborne party did not arrive until the end of the month, and the rear party (with all the transport), which came by sea, did not disembark until 5th October. It was a very weak 1st Battalion, therefore, which set about its numerous tasks, and until other troops gradually became available the demands far exceeded the supply. Fully armed Japanese guards and patrols had to be allowed to carry on as willing and well-dis-

ciplined "allies," outrageous as this seemed to all ranks at first. However, they soon got used to the idea; also to the sight of Japanese in charge of transport, and even of motor launches flying the White Ensign. It was certainly an odd situation, but the Japanese, though foster parents of the Viet-Minh movement (so soon to give trouble), were usually on their best behaviour themselves, with a view, no doubt, to earning priority passages home.

The Viet-Minh rebels caused little serious trouble during the first week or so, but then anti-French demonstrations became daily more violent. The few French troops available, even with Japanese help, were unable to prevent considerable numbers of well-armed rebels from entering the City and inciting all-too-willing hooligan elements to join in an orgy of murder, looting and arson. French troops and civilians suffered most, but Gurkha guards also became objects of attack.

By 24th September rebel gangs were running riot all over the City, and on that day our troops were first called on to take serious action. Here we must introduce the 3rd Battalion, whose advanced party, under Lieutenant-Colonel H. G. J. Purcell, had deplaned on 18th September. The rest of the Battalion, less the sea party, followed on that critical day, the 24th, and it was almost immediately rushed to various action stations. Major C. U. Blascheck, M.C., was sent off, with "D" Company, to reinforce the 1st Battalion Mobile Column, to which we shall revert presently.

The remainder was at once fully committed, like the 1st Battalion, to guard and mobile-column duties. We cannot attempt to trace the course of the Viet-Minh revolution here, but must confine ourselves to the events directly concerning our two Battalions. We shall follow their fortunes separately, and in more detail, presently.

Briefly, the 1st Battalion operated in the Northern Sector of the City for six weeks, then went up country for three months, before sailing for India at the end of January, 1946. The 3rd Battalion spent a fortnight in the Southern Sector of Saigon itself and then four months in the Khanh Hoi Island part of the City, until it also sailed at the end of January—but to go farther east, to Makassar. The following accounts of the activities of the two Battalions are taken from the operational portions of Newsletters published in the Regimental Journal of June, 1946.

The 1st Battalion. "On the 24th September we had our first

clash with the Viet-Minh when two platoons defeated an attack on the power station, killing two rebels and wounding several others. This was only a minor skirmish compared with those which followed. Major Blascheck and his company from the 3rd Battalion came under our command for a week and immediately got involved in a series of operations. One of these involved a sweep through a northern suburb of Saigon by Dinforce, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Jarvis and consisting of a company of ours, the 3/1st company, and a company of 4/17th Dogras, accompanied by French police. During the sweep twenty-four arrests were made, and twenty-eight Viet-Minh were killed. A counter-attack was then repulsed with probably further rebel losses. Major C. U. Blascheck, M.C., was slightly wounded while he was removing one of his wounded men, and was awarded a bar to his M.C. (immediate). Our other casualties in this and later operations in the City amounted to: killed, 1 G.O.R.; wounded, Jemadar Churamani Thapa and 7 G.O.Rs. The Jemadar's life was saved by Rifleman Tekbahadur Ghale, who carried him in from an exposed position under heavy fire, and earned a M.M.

" The situation became easier by mid-October and the Battalion was able to celebrate a fairly peaceful Dushera with a completely reunited Battalion. It was fortunate that we had just been relieved of most of our guards and duties and that the Viet-Minh had called a local truce. (We shall soon see that this truce did not apply elsewhere.) On 23rd October the Battalion moved up country northwards with the recently arrived 100th Brigade, leaving one company behind to find guards for the Commission. Our Brigade covered an area of about 200 square miles containing approximately 22,000 Japanese. We became responsible for the Thu Dan Mot Sub-Area, with our H.Q. at the town of that name (twenty miles north of Saigon) where we were well housed in French barracks. We had one troop of 23rd Mountain Regiment and a Jat M.M.G. Company under our orders, as well as the usual services, so were almost self-contained. Rations and communications were delivered by convoy three times a week, guarded by 4/10th G.R.

" Our task of disarming the 8,000-odd Japanese in our sub-area could not begin until we had restored some sort of order, as the Viet-Minh amused themselves by felling trees across roads, throwing grenades at vehicles and sniping camps, apart from sabotaging anything belonging to the French. The Battalion

sub-area was gradually enlarged to include Ben Cat, twenty miles farther north of Thu Dan Mot.

“ Most of it consisted of irrigated ricefields, intersected by tidal nullahs, and there were also large areas of rubber plantations or thick jungle coming close up to the roads. Only the main roads were metalled; the rest were dirt or mud tracks which soon broke up. On several occasions when we had armoured cars in support we were unable to use them as they could not move across country and the Viet-Minh felled trees across the roads as fast as we could lift them. All operations were, therefore, essentially foot-slogging, using our M.T. to take us as close as possible, and very tiring work it was in the steaming climate.

“ Japanese were ordered to guard all the vulnerable points on the main roads, and all the French rubber dumps, some containing as much as 20,000 tons of crude rubber. In all we had about 4,500 Japanese on guard duties alone, and one Japanese battalion in Ben Cat was given the job of keeping order.

“ In the course of our sweeps all houses had to be searched for arms, and a very varied collection we got—everything, in fact, from spears, cross-bows and poisoned darts to Japanese rifles and grenades. The primitive weapons were the most numerous, and they made good firewood. On three occasions we met parties of Annamites armed with L.M.Gs., and in one such clash a convoy of ours suffered several casualties.

“ There were many comings and goings of British officers late in November. Colonel Jarvis departed on leave to the U.K., and Major R. W. Clark took over command.

“ The situation had calmed down sufficiently by the first week of December to start the formal Japanese surrender parades. These went on almost continuously up to the 20th January, 1946, the day we finally handed over to the French. Altogether we disarmed 7,500 men and accepted the personal surrender of 1,000 swords. Before the French took over from us all the Japanese had been concentrated at the port of Cap St. Jacques (south-east of Saigon), to be repatriated as shipping became available.”

The Battalion moved into Saigon on 21st January and a week later the main body sailed for India in H.M.S. *Sefton*, leaving a rear party to follow a few days later. We shall leave the Battalion disembarking at Calcutta on 8th February, 1946, and return to it in the next chapter. The casualties incurred in French Indo-China were five killed and fourteen wounded

against 162 Viet-Minh killed, including those accounted for by the attached company of the 3rd Battalion, to which we now revert in a further extract from the Regimental Journal.

The 3rd Battalion in Saigon. "On 25th September, 1945, the day after the main body deplaned, Lieutenant-Colonel Purcell was appointed Commander, Southern Sector, Saigon, with the following under his command: 3/1st G.R. less 'D' Company, 1/19th Hyderabad Regiment, elements of the 4/17th Dogra Regiment, one Japanese Regiment, and French police. On the same day the Battalion became fully committed, with Major C. M. Dodkins, D.S.O., in officiating command.

"On the 26th the Battalion carried out a complete sweep along the axis of the main road known as the Boulevard de Galliéni. This was found to be heavily road-blocked, and a tedious battle of street fighting ensued. The Viet-Minh had both rifles and L.M.Gs. and used discharger grenades quite freely. Their shooting was poor, fortunately, and our 2-inch mortars and PIAT guns quickly settled the issue. We were most impressed by the efficiency of the rebel Red Cross squads, which were always on the scene to remove casualties with remarkable speed. It was thus impossible to tell how many casualties we had inflicted when we withdrew at nightfall, but we had none ourselves despite a vast number of near misses.

"Next day two companies did a similar sweep along the banks of the Arroyo Chinois (the river separating Saigon proper from Khanh Hoi Island). They met only slight opposition as the Viet-Minh were busily engaged elsewhere, attacking part of the Hyderabad Regiment. Meanwhile 'B' Company crossed over to Khanh Hoi Island and occupied the Abattoir, killing ten Viet-Minh on the way. The Battalion H.Q. Platoon was also engaged along the road to the wireless station, clearing five road-blocks and killing or capturing rebels as it progressed, but without any loss. A few days later a savage Viet-Minh attack on this platoon was repulsed with rebel casualties of three dead and four wounded.

"The Battalion's main role was to keep open the main artery of the Boulevard de Galliéni, and the streets leading to the Arroyo Chinois, and to protect certain vital points, leaving a small mobile reserve force in hand. Day after day, and sometimes three times a day, our small mobile columns were called out to rescue captured French, search houses, clear road-blocks, and even to cordon fires. Bazaars and factories were burnt

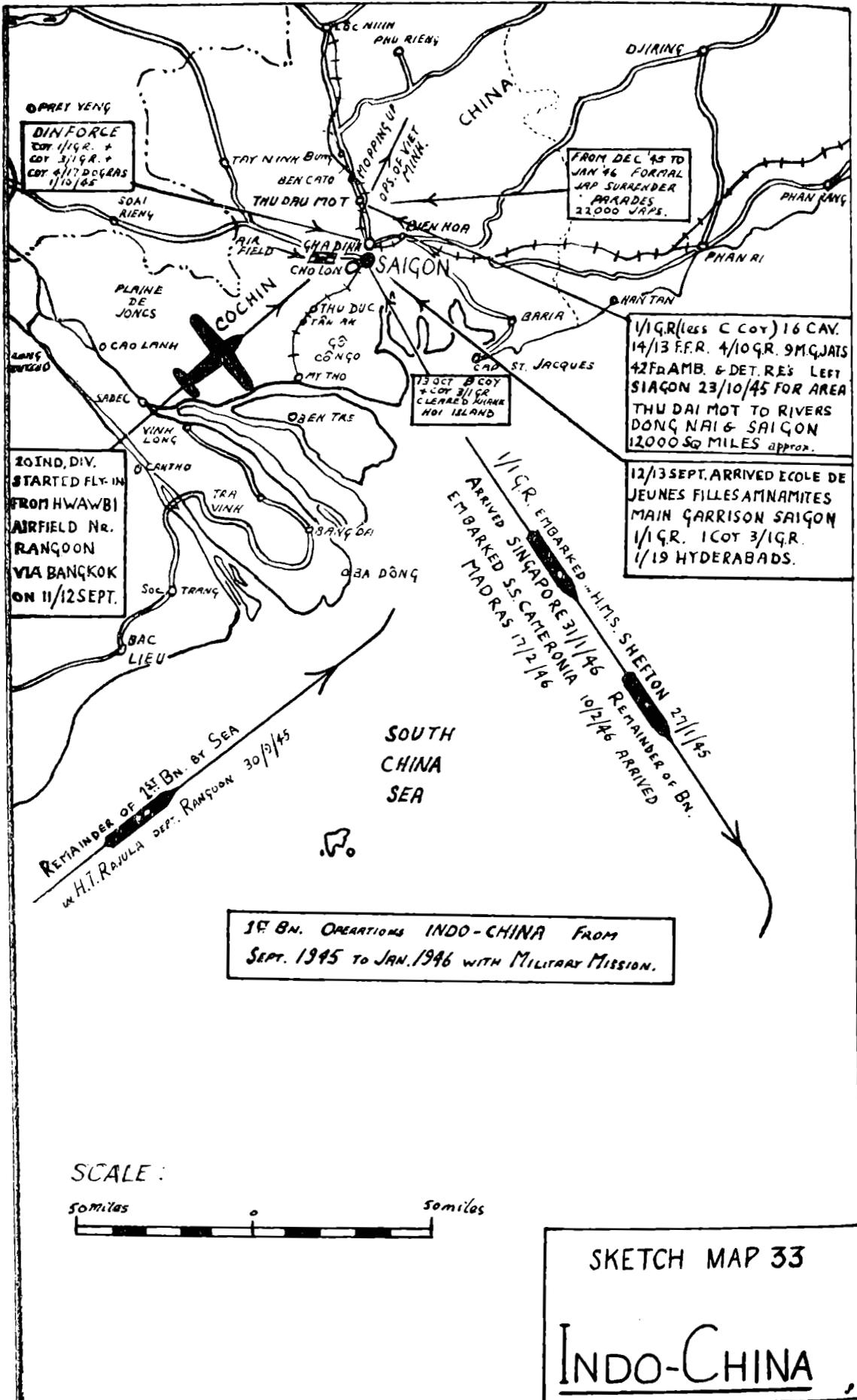
nightly, and the French community lived indoors in terror for their lives.

“ The worst incident for us was when an ammunition convoy, with an escort including eighteen of our men, was heavily ambushed north of Saigon. We lost four killed, three wounded and two missing, believed killed. This was a sad blow, as we lost some first-class N.C.Os. There is little doubt that the Japanese knew all about this ambush, as they fired not a single shot to defend the convoy though well placed to do so.

“ On 3rd October, Colonel Purcell reassumed command of the Battalion (now united, with ‘ D ’ Company back) and we took over the defence of the whole of Khanh Hoi Island, which included the vital area of the docks, as well as numerous factories and stores. It was a vast area for one Battalion, especially as it was populated by some of the worst elements in the Saigon area.

“ Our orders were not to provoke incidents and only to fire when fired upon. The Viet-Minh took full advantage of this situation to make provocative demonstrations. On one occasion 1,000 of them marched past and gave a ceremonial ‘ eyes right ’ to ‘ D ’ Company’s Quarter Guard, in the south-east corner of the Island. Every day up to the 12th October there were incidents of one sort or another, and it became a daily routine task to clear road-blocks along the main streets. The rebels increasingly used incendiary grenades fired from discharger cups and petrol bombs thrown at close range to set fire to factories, oil tanks and wood dumps. Our fire-fighters then became targets, but fortunately the rebels were no marksmen.

“ Vigorous land and river patrols restored order during the 11th and 12th, and on the 13th we carried out a complete sweep of the Island, under operation ‘ China.’ Under command for this were: one company each from 1/1st G.R. and 4/17th Dogras, and some Naval units. In all thirteen prisoners were taken and a quantity of arms and ammunition was recovered, but the rebel elements were conspicuous by their absence and must somehow have received warning. They went into action again on the night of the 14th when they staged determined assaults, covered by L.M.Gs. and grenades, on three separate company areas. ‘ C ’ Company, in the docks, had to throw back a Jap-style yelling charge by twenty rebels and must have accounted for at least fifteen of them, though only four bodies were found. Later, however, twenty-two wounded Annamites were found in the



Cholon Hospital and there were marks of many fresh graves on the Island.

“The costly failure of this undoubtedly well-planned and coordinated offensive probably decided the rebels against any further operations of this nature. Minor incidents continued and a few half-hearted and vain efforts were made to cross to the island from the east and south. Searchlights played a useful part in disposing of the assault craft on the Saigon River. One young rifleman considered it his duty to call ‘halt’ three times to a swimming Annamite before shooting him—but he was unaware that Annamites cannot tread water.

“During the first half of November our patrols met some opposition when they crossed the Canal de Derivation southwards. Ground reconnaissances also confirmed air reports that all the bridges on the road south to Long Kien were destroyed and covered by bunker positions.

“On the 18th Major E. W. Macdonald set out southwards with two platoons to raid Long Kien (where French captives were said to be held by the rebels) in conjunction with a riverborne force under Major E. Gopsill, with two more platoons (forty men) which were to land south-east of the village. Major Macdonald’s force ran into opposition at once and had to clear one strong outpost by assault, but then bumped the enemy’s main, well-bunkered positions on the south bank of a nullah at Ben Ho. Major Macdonald decided that it would be too costly to tackle the crossing of the fifty-yard broken bridge without artillery support and was given orders to withdraw. It took him six hours to fight his way back, with rebel bands cutting in behind and following up in rear. Colonel Purcell took out reinforcements, including the mortar platoon, to cover the last stages of the withdrawal, which was eventually accomplished at a cost of only one G.O.R. wounded. The rebels’ shooting was again wild, but there were several ‘near misses,’ Captain W. M. Harrison being slightly wounded and the Commanding Officer having his hat shot off.

“‘Gopsill Force’ also met opposition after advancing about 600 yards from its landing-place towards Long Kien and was ordered to halt there. While waiting for the tide to drop sufficiently for its launch to negotiate the bridges on the return journey to the Saigon River, the Force was closely engaged by the enemy, using both heavy and light automatics. The launch was badly holed in several places by an enemy anti-tank weapon when it

eventually started to run the gauntlet down the river, with snipers on both banks, but the losses were remarkably light—only two G.O.Rs. and one of the Japanese crew wounded. The rebel losses in both areas on that day were thirty, plus four prisoners taken.

“Plans were then made for clearing the rebel stronghold at Long Kien on 22nd November. ‘A’ and ‘C’ Companies were relieved after dark on the 21st by companies of the 4/17th Dogras and 9/12th Frontier Force Regiment, and sallied forth early next morning with a troop of 114th Field Regiment, R.A., in support. Leading off with ‘C’ Company, Major E. Gopsill successfully seized two strong-points in turn, then swept on to clear Ben Ho with the help of some very good shooting by the Gunners. This village proved to be a big Viet-Minh H.Q. and a refuge for Japanese deserters, two of whom were killed there out of at least thirty in action that day. We also captured a large quantity of equipment and ammunition of all kinds.

“Major M. H. Kelleher passed through with ‘A’ Company, in the intense mid-day heat, and quickly occupied Long Kien with only slight opposition. The Commanding Officer decided not to spend the night there, so the withdrawal started early in the afternoon in good North-West Frontier style. There were two rear-guard actions on the way back, but in both cases the rapid use of artillery and 3-inch mortars silenced the rebels and enabled us to get back without a single casualty.

“The Viet Minh casualties, though difficult to assess, must have amounted to at least forty. The French General Le Clerc was extremely pleased as this operation cleared the area sufficiently for the French to assume control and to start mopping up farther south. The French continued to take over more and more commitments in the City, too, and life became almost normal and peaceful by Christmas time.

“During the closing weeks of our time in Saigon, operational duties were restricted to flag marches and night patrols against looting in the docks.”

Finally, on 28th January, 1946—the day on which the 1st Battalion sailed for India—the 3rd Battalion left in a Dutch ship, named the *Tegleburg*, to arrive at Makassar on 2nd February.

The total casualties in French Indo-China were: killed, 6 G.O.Rs.; died of wounds, 2 G.O.Rs.; missing, believed killed, 1 G.O.R.; wounded, 2 British officers and 12 G.O.Rs.

The casualties inflicted on the Viet-Minh rebels amounted to:

killed, 82, wounded 30, and captured 44 (excluding those accounted for by " D " Company while attached to the 1st Battalion).

The following awards were made for gallantry in the French Indo-China operations: Bar to M.C.—Major C. U. Blascheck, M.C.; M.C.—Major E. Gopsill, Subedar Puranbahadur Gurung, and Subedar Kalu Gurung; M.M.—Rifleman 10291 Sherbahadur Rana.

The British General Service Medal (1918), green and mauve riband, with clasp " South East Asia, 1945-46," was also issued to all who served with the 1st and 3rd Battalions in French Indo-China.

General Gracey received a unique honour from the (mainly Annamite) Municipal Council of Saigon when he was made a Citoyen d'Honneur—the equivalent of the Freedom of the City, never before or since (1955) accorded to anyone else. He was also awarded the French Legion of Honour (Commander) and Croix-de-Guerre, and the Grand Cross Royal Order of Cambodia.

THE 3RD BATTALION IN MAKASSAR

The Battalion arrived in Makassar on 2nd February, 1946, as part of the 80th Indian Infantry Brigade Group, which was to relieve the 21st Australian Infantry Brigade. The Brigade now came under operational command of Allied Forces Netherlands East Indies (AFNEI) and the Brigadier assumed the title of Force Commander, Outer Islands. The Brigade's role was to support the Dutch authorities in preserving law and order, if necessary, and to act as an emergency strategic reserve for AFNEI.

The 3rd Battalion formed one of the three Battalion groups which were made up with detachments of sappers, signals, medical and transport units, and was itself located in southern Celebes, with H.Q. in comfortable barracks outside Makassar City.

All ranks of the 2/16th Australian Infantry Regiment, from whom the Battalion took over, were found to be most hospitable and friendly, and the " Diggers " and " Pummy B's " (as they labelled our men) got on famously together.

Makassar suffered in comparison with Saigon as regards social amenities, but with no " war " or outward signs of unrest the Battalion was able to devote its five months there to undisturbed individual and sub-unit training, particularly in internal-defence duties.

The Dutch were in almost complete control of the situation apart from minor troubles with the ex-rebel Indonesian troops, whose leaders had accepted a form of truce under the aegis of the Union Jack.

The latter needed to be reminded of their peaceful intentions by occasional visits of what were described as surveillance parties.

One such party was sent to Menado, at the north-eastern "finger-tip" of Celebes, in March, under command of Major E. Gopsill, M.C. Successful joint conferences were held with the rebel leaders and Dutch authorities and minor matters of dispute were settled. The rebels were also warned that the would-be militant Youth Movement was to hand in all arms and grenades which were said to have been issued to its members.

Colonel Purcell himself made an early liaison tour of southern Celebes with an Australian officer and a small escort, and returned reassured after visiting a number of the local Kareengs, or State Rulers. He was also "very impressed by the beautiful country," and soon others had a chance to enjoy it, too. Companies were sent out in turn to training camps, and every week a party of twenty to thirty men were sent up to a pleasant hill station at Malino, where they enjoyed the comforts of a holiday camp and also some good shikar.

In the middle of March the Battalion celebrated Holi with "the biggest party of all times" as a form of peace celebration promised to it in Burma but so long deferred. All Makassar society attended and were enthralled by the superb skill and costumes of the nautch performers—the result of intensive rehearsals by the winning team in an inter-company competition.

On 19th March, that grand old warrior of thirty years' service, Subedar Ramsaran Pun Bahadur, O.B.I., I.O.M., returned to the Battalion to become Subedar-Major. He had won his I.O.M. at Scraggy, on the Shenam Saddle, in May, 1944, when he was twice wounded, and had since been with 14th Gurkha Rifles, near Dehra Dun, and at the Centre in Dharmsala. He soon made his mark as an outstanding Subedar-Major, and, as Colonel Purcell has written, "was unquestionably *the* personality of the 80th Brigade—a subject of admiring comment wherever he went." He was later to become an Honorary Captain, and Sirdar Bahadur, before he retired (as Subedar-Major of the reconstituted 2nd Battalion), in October, 1947.

This peering into the future may, perhaps, be pardoned here because by April, 1946, the 3rd Battalion had been informed

that it would not be disbanded on return to India, but would be reconstituted as a reborn 2nd Battalion, together with a volunteer element of the old Battalion. This subject was of lively interest to everyone as the Battalion's time in Makassar drew to a close. Colonel Purcell wrote: "The honour bestowed on us, by being made the 2nd Battalion, has come as a just reward to the officers and men of this Battalion who fought so gallantly in Burma. The spirit and *esprit de corps* which they have built together can never die. To add this to the fine reputation of the 2nd Battalion for their stoical courage during the war, and their great achievements against impossible odds, will, to my mind, result in the formation of a Battalion second to none in the history of the Gurkha Brigade."

There were no further incidents of any operational interest to record, apart from a visit by Majors Dodkins, Trubridge and Gopsill in April to Balikpapan, on the east coast of Borneo. There they helped the Dutch authorities with the arrangements for the repatriation of Japanese, known as Operation "Nip-off."

The Battalion eventually left Makassar at the end of June, and after three weeks at sea and a week in the train, arrived at Peshawar, in the North-West Frontier Province of India, on 27th July, 1946.

A little over a fortnight later it was to merge its identity with that of the 2nd Battalion, but the tale of its reconstitution will be told in the next chapter.

We have left the 4th Battalion too long flying eastwards from Rangoon for nearly a year of further wanderings.

THE 4TH BATTALION IN SIAM

(Map 34, facing page 296)

During its period of rest and refitting north of Rangoon after the final operations in the Sittang swamps (10th July to 10th August, 1945), the Battalion heard glowing reports from those who preceded it to the "promised land" of Siam. But the 33rd was the last Brigade of the 7th Division to be flown in from Rangoon to Bangkok, and the 4th Battalion's turn did not come until 20th October, 1945.

The Battalion record describes Bangkok as almost a paradise for a unit which had been declared under-nourished a year earlier and had since campaigned for many months on hard-scale rations. There was an abundance of the superb Siamese rice as well as

many tasty items of extra messing, such as fish—but only a month in Bangkok in which to make up for lost time and weight.

It was a quiet month, however, with no militant “ movements ” to disturb the peace, such as we have described in French Indo-China. The Battalion was thus able to continue the smartening-up training which had started in Burma and was now all the more necessary in view of its many ceremonial guard duties.

Leave to Nepal was reopened soon after arrival in Bangkok, the first batch of 175 men being flown off during the first fortnight and 150 later. Repatriation or leave also began to claim some of the British officers who had served longest with the Battalion. Major W. G. Hughes, M.C., Captain S. G. Jones and Captain R. H. Joynson all left early in November.

In the third week of November the Battalion moved by rail to the far north of Siam, and by the 25th was split, with two companies at M. Chiang Mai and the remainder at Lampang, fifty miles to the south-east. Numbers of Japanese troops had continued to straggle over the hill tracks from Burma, to collect in Northern Siam, and the 33rd Brigade was responsible for disarming and sending them on southwards. (The 7th Division eventually disarmed and concentrated 113,000 Japanese troops.)

The Battalion's main tasks were to destroy arms and ammunition and to salvage valuable equipment. By 4th December over 20,000 rifles and 250 machine guns had been destroyed and 300 tons of equipment had been carefully packed. A few days later, after a farewell party given by the friendly Siamese Army officers, many of whom had fought with the underground or anti-Japanese movement, the Battalion went back for a final month in Bangkok.

It had been warned for an early move overseas, with various rumoured destinations, including most of the Far East, and India too. The idea of returning to India, probably for early disbandment, was the least welcome, but the new destination proved to be Malaya, with another nine months' lease of life overseas. Before leaving Bangkok a small representative party of the Battalion attended the final Japanese surrender parade, held on 11th January. It was a pity that the whole Battalion was not given the chance to see twenty-four Japanese generals and other officers, many of whom had fought against it, handing in their swords in humble submission. It was also a pity that the Battalion kept no trophies from all the equipment salvaged, as

this had been handed over only to be immediately jettisoned far out at sea without even being unpacked.

On 19th January, 1946, the Battalion sailed in M.V. *Circassia* and disembarked at Singapore four days later.

THE 4TH BATTALION IN MALAYA

(Map 35, facing page 300)

From Singapore the Battalion moved to western Johore, where it remained based for nearly a month on Muar, at the mouth of the Muar River (100 miles north-west of Singapore), with detachments along the coast and inland as far as Yong Peng (forty miles west of Kluang). It was soon busy helping the local Military Administration to search for hidden arms. Road-blocks and cordons had to be established while drives took place at Muar and elsewhere, but the results were disappointing.

The former Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (M.P.A.J.A.), mentioned towards the end of Chapter Nine, had by then changed its character and become a new Communist Anti-British Army. Many of the die-hard Communists had refused to join the demobilization parades held in December, 1945; others had got successfully away with the arms we had largely provided, notwithstanding the praise (and medals) also lavished upon them. This Communist army was to cause more and more trouble in the years ahead until its open war with the Malayan Civil Government became the Emergency of 1948 onwards, in which the new Brigade of Gurkhas was to become deeply involved.

On 28th January, Major D. H. L. Parker's company had to disperse an unruly crowd of Chinese communists in Muar and arrest five of the ringleaders. Later, the trial of these men was broken up by an invading mob of 1,500, and Colonel Hiatt had to turn out troops to restore order, fortunately without having to open fire. The crowd were content to march off distributing leaflets urging their "dear brother soldiers" to join them instead of opposing them.

Early in February British and Gurkha officers collected at 33rd Brigade H.Q., at Segamat, to say farewell to Major-General G. C. Evans, C.B.E., D.S.O., who had so successfully commanded the 7th Division since December, 1944, and were all sorry to see him go. Major-General O. de T. Lovett succeeded him.

In mid-February the 33rd Brigade moved north to Perak, with H.Q. at Kuala Kangsar, but the 4th Battalion broke journey

about half-way, at Tanjong Malim, on the 19th and remained there ten days. It was there, we may recall, that the remnants of the 2nd Battalion rallied after the disastrous Slim River action early in January, 1942. On this occasion the 4th Battalion enjoyed a quiet interlude, with a few wild-pig shoots, awaiting a decision on their destination. Instead of moving to Taiping as expected, the Battalion found it was to remain at Kuala Kangsar when it arrived there on 2nd March. The previous garrison, 4/15th Punjab, had been called away to deal with a sudden emergency sixty miles to the north at Grik, where Chinese guerillas had made savage raids on Malay villages.

Kuala Kangsar thus became the Battalion's home or base for the rest of its time in Malaya, until it left for India at the end of September. It was given a large area in which to patrol and keep order, with one company at Taiping, one at Sungei Siput (ten miles to the east), and a platoon at Manong, on the west bank of the Perak River, thirteen miles to the south. The last was only a few miles north of the Blanja pontoon bridge, scene of the 2nd Battalion action on 22nd December, 1941, shown on Map 8.

Looking back to seventy years earlier, we find, on pages 73 and 74 of our first volume, that the Regiment—then only one battalion, still "Goorkha Light Infantry," and the first Goorkha unit ever to serve overseas—was then based on Kuala Kangsar, operating against rebel Malays in the Perak River valley. Enquiries from even the oldest inhabitants evoked no memories or legends, however, of these earlier days. The old volume records: "The little State of Perak . . . was at this time in a state of considerable disorder," as it was in 1946, but the rebels were now well-armed Chinese Communists.

Four days after the Battalion's arrival (6th March) a Chinese band, reported at a thousand strong, swooped down on the Malayan village of Bekor, on the opposite bank of the river to Manong, massacred sixty men, women, and children, and carried off thirty-eight more. The slaughter was over before the Manong platoon could get across, but the wounded were tended and about 400 survivors were taken to a safe refuge on the west bank. Next day the platoon intervened in time to prevent another Chinese-Malayan battle. A battery of the 23rd Mountain Regiment, R.I.A., arrived at Bekor later that day, and order was quickly restored. Villages were searched for arms, and some were found in Manong and elsewhere.

On 17th March Lieutenant-Colonel H. V. Rose arrived from

the 5th Battalion to take over command from Lieutenant-Colonel A. G. Hiatt (who departed for a training course in England on 13th May). A tragedy occurred a few days later near Sungei Siput, where "A" Company was carrying out extensive patrolling to prevent communal clashes and illicit rubber tapping. Lieutenant R. E. Murray Duncan, leading out a patrol in the dark early hours of 20th March, stepped on a live wire laid down by the locals from the high-tension electric cables to form a game trap and was instantly killed. The loss of this very popular young officer, who had only recently rejoined from Divisional H.Q., was keenly felt by all ranks.

Towards the end of March the Taiping company rejoined, and only the Sungei Siput company and the Manong platoon remained out. Patrolling, raiding and searching continued as before, but most of the Battalion was comfortably housed in Kuala Kangsar, with ample parade and playing grounds. Leave was opened for parties of officers and men to enjoy sea-bathing at Penang or the cool climate of the Cameron Highlands.

A sad feature of this last period was the departure of some of the "old" officers, one after another, and of many Gurkha ranks on leave or release. Old ties and friendships, forged in battle, were being broken for ever. Garrison duty in Malaya was now recognized to be the Battalion's swan-song, with disbandment looming ahead on return to India. Captain N. de Vere White arrived at the end of May with a very welcome draft of five British officers and 300 men—reinforcements and returned leave men—to make up for the losses mentioned.

On 8th June Colonel Rose, with "B" Company under Major B. F. L. Rooney, attended the Perak Victory Parade in Taiping. Soon after this Colonel Rose left to visit the Regimental Centre at Dharmasala, and Major J. R. Smith took over the officiating command, which he held for most of the remaining stay in Malaya. Colonel Rose, when he rejoined early in July, was more often officiating as 33rd Brigade Commander than as Commanding Officer during Brigadier E. H. W. Cobb's frequent absences.

The Battalion became widely dispersed by the end of June when Major Rooney took "B" Company to Grik and assumed responsibility for law and order in an area as large as Wales. In addition to the previous detachment at Sungei Siput (with a platoon at Lasah, ten miles north), platoons were also sent to Penang and Singapore.

Raids and searches continued to produce good results in

recovered arms and equipment, including in one instance a Vauxhall car. The men also revelled in pig shoots—with no hog-hunters to express their horror—and the pig score-board by August showed 252. “D” Company, at Sungei Siput, headed the list with sixty-five. As the Battalion’s time abroad drew to a close, “A” Company took part in a last anti-bandit drive, which covered a coastal strip and had the appropriate code-name of “Mudlark.” No contraband, except some opium, was found and the friendly villagers were more amused than scared by the antics of this raid-*cum*-regatta. “A” Company had, indeed, attempted a nautical exploit in three country craft, one of which sank and the other two proved unlaunchable, so they floundered forward on what was anything but dry land.

We shall not linger over the scene of the final farewell at Kuala Kangsar, marked by the Divisional Commander’s taking the salute as the Battalion marched to the station behind the bands of the Kumaon Rifles—their old friends the 1/19th Hyderabad Regiment in their new guise—and of the Indian Engineers.

Their welcome at Calcutta on 4th October (after four days at sea) was damp and depressing. It was raining, and as the ship docked a sleeping creature on the quay roused himself lazily to unfurl a scarlet cotton banner marked “Welcome back to India.”

A formal V.I.Ps’ visit followed, and soon the Battalion was trudging through the downpour to the martial strains of a band half hidden under a vast tarpaulin. There was nothing to look forward to, as everyone knew, except the sudden death of the Battalion as such and uncertain futures for all of them.

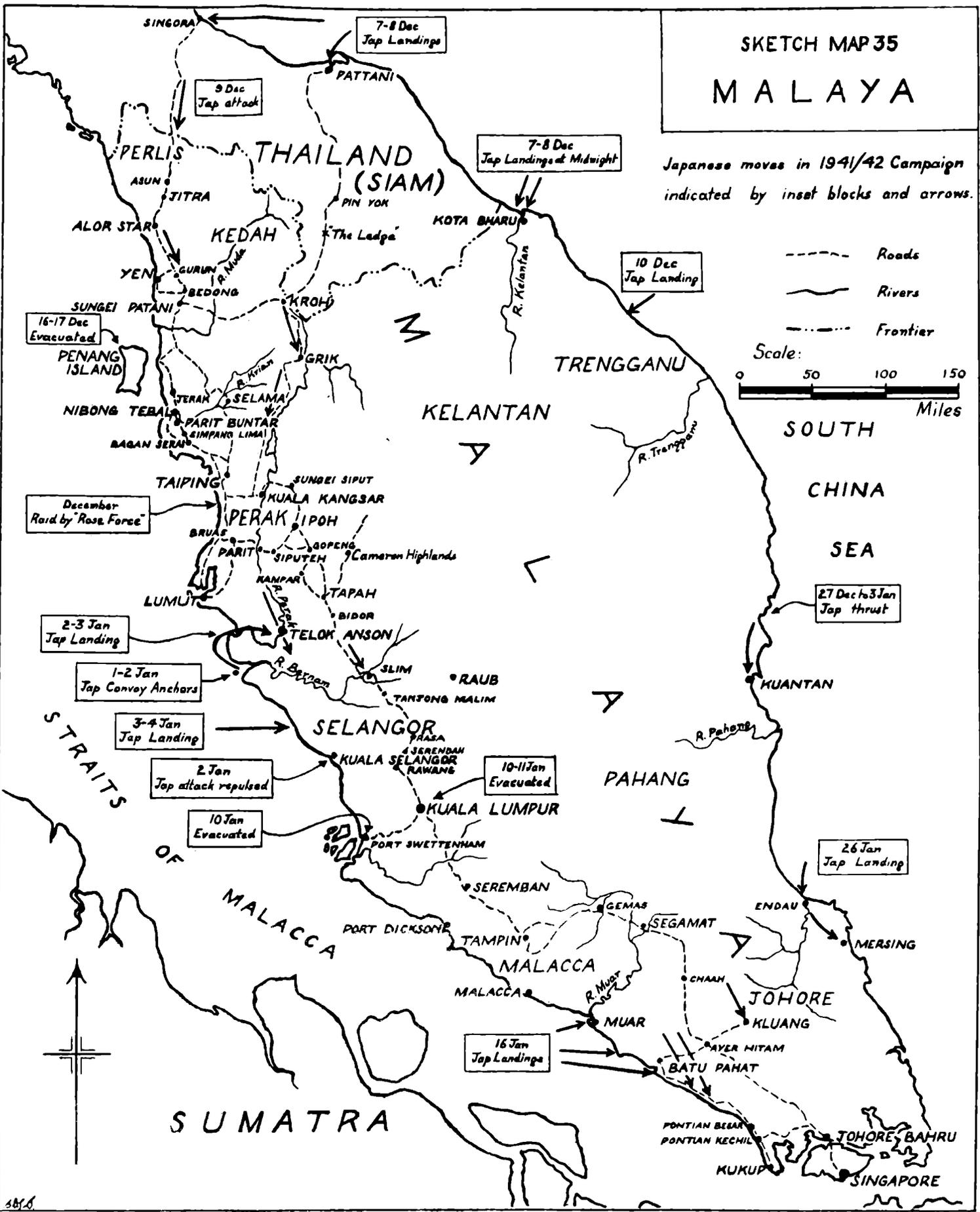
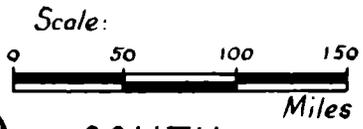
A few days’ rail journey, ending in the “toy-train” from Pathankot to Nagrota, brought the Battalion to Tanda Camp, where the process of disbandment at once began. Lieutenant-Colonel C. H. D. Berthon, who had taken the Battalion to Arakan three years earlier, came down from Dharmasala to hold a farewell ceremonial parade at the end of October. The Battalion marched past for the last time while the band played its own march-past tune of “Blaze Away.” So ends the five-and-a-half-year history of the 4th Battalion. Officers and men melted away on release or transfer to other units; just over 300 Gurkha ranks went to the surviving Regular Battalions; the rest were mustered out to return to their homes. Disbandment was officially completed on 30th November, 1946.

The Battalion’s record speaks for itself. The awards it won and the price it paid have been recorded in the relevant Appendices.

SKETCH MAP 35 MALAYA

Japanese moves in 1941/42 Campaign indicated by inset blocks and arrows.

- Roads
- ~ Rivers
- - - Frontier



CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

INDIA, 1945-1947

IN previous chapters we have very sadly reached the stage of having to write off both the 4th and 5th Battalions by November, 1946. It now remains to carry forward the two surviving Battalions and the Regimental Centre to the final hand-over which followed the Partition of 15th August, 1947.

The 1st Battalion went from Calcutta, where we left it disembarking on 8th February, 1946, to Clement Town, Dehra Dun, to start a process of demobilization similar to that with which it began this volume after the First World War. Again it was not given very long to re-form, with a constantly changing team of officers and men, before it was drawn to the North-West Frontier, with Razmak as the inevitable magnet. But this fate was delayed for nine months, the first two being spent at Dehra Dun, "in reunions and partings and the dispersal of the old and bold," as a Newsletter puts it, and the next seven near Nagpur, divided between Kamptee and Sonogaon, a near-by airfield. In Nagpur, apart from its Internal Security duties, which included an occasional company detachment in Sitabuldi Fort, the Battalion was free to reintroduce the peace-time routine of progressive training, starting with weapon mastery.

Gardening also became a serious military operation in conformity with the prevailing "grow more food" campaign. But the ploughshares received were certainly not made from swords and most of them proved unequal to the heavy Nagpur soil.

Razmak thus welcomed another Battalion of the Regiment on 17th November, 1946, only two months after the 5th Battalion had departed for disbandment. Unlikely as it then seemed, the 1st Battalion was to be the last Gurkha battalion there, and its short stay of just under twelve months ended only a few weeks before Razmak was abandoned as a Regular garrison station by the new Pakistan. (*Maps 36 and 37.*)

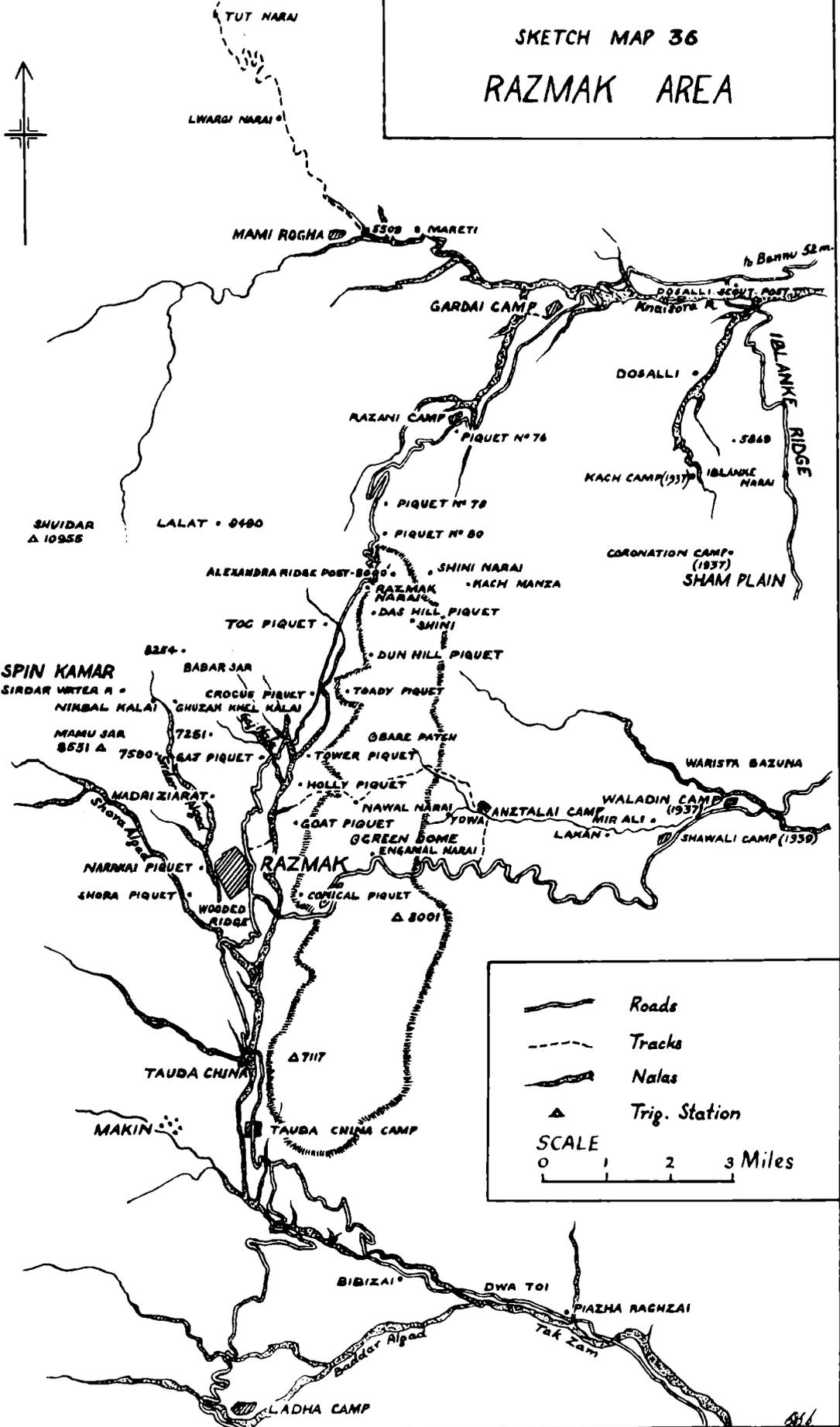
The Battalion was soon engaged in the familiar routine of snow clearing and road protection. In February, 1947, it provided the last Regular garrison of that "highest outpost of Empire," Alexandra Post (mentioned in Chapter Three), and left the Tochi Scouts in charge.

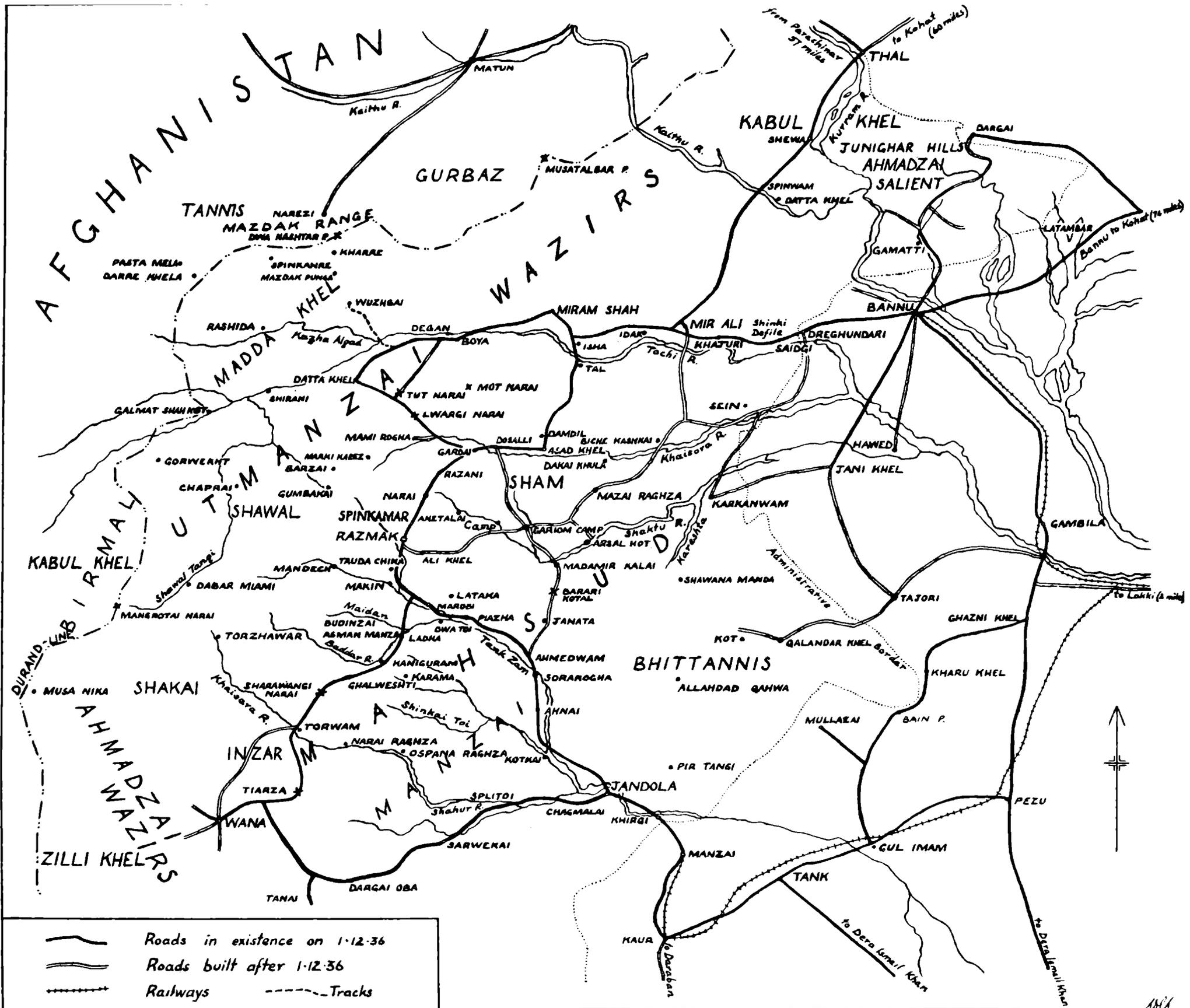
In May the old Road Open procedure was modified and a system of close convoy escorts was introduced. The old Bagai firm, whose fleet of lorries became familiar to so many old-stagers, was replaced by a new organization known as the "North Waziristan Tribal Transport" (N.W.T.T.). Convoys of stores and supplies began to run daily with only local tribal escorts, called "badraggas," and with no other protection. Military personnel convoys, which usually ran twice weekly, were given additional escorts of armoured cars and a platoon of infantry, with a section of mortars. A mobile column, consisting of a battalion group and known as "Razmobcol," stood by on these occasions, ready to move out if summoned by wireless. The Tochi Scouts, based on Alexandra Post, Dosalli, and elsewhere, also took on wider responsibilities for "gashts," or sweeps over the surrounding hills.

This change was hailed as an historic occasion, the end of the wearisome routine of R.P. which had called out two battalions of the Razmak garrison twice a week for about ten years, but events proved otherwise. In the middle of June the Battalion accompanied the Razmak Column (Razcol) to Gardai and thence on a reconnaissance up the Mami Rogha valley, where the other battalions of the Regiment had so frequently been in action. Razcol's move stirred up unusual activity by hostile gangs, and the 1st Battalion had a sharp clash with one of these on 15th June. A platoon advancing to occupy a piquet position on the high ridge east of Mareti was heavily fired on and had one man wounded. Later a weak section of this platoon (one N.C.O. and four men) occupying an isolated position under heavy fire, was charged by a gang of fifteen from dead ground while enemy covering parties pinned the rest of the platoon. In the hand-to-hand struggle which followed one tribesman was killed and two were wounded, but two riflemen were injured when they fell over a cliff.

Lieutenant P. L. Davis was awarded the M.C. for gallantly rescuing these injured men under heavy fire. The situation was restored by a company under Captain H. K. Dodwell, who skilfully extricated the troops on this flank without further casualties.

SKETCH MAP 36
RAZMAK AREA





During the return march to Razmak on 18th June, the Battalion, with a company of 3/14th Punjab Regiment attached, did a sweep along the high ridge from Dun Piquet southwards. This move, combined with another by 1st Rajput Regiment from below, completely surprised a gang of about fifteen hostiles lying-up under Bare Patch, and inflicted casualties on them.

The Column was played into Razmak camp by the Regimental Band, which had recently arrived from Dharmasala under Captain F. J. Reed, to the unusual accompaniment of mountain guns still in action close by.

As a result of this renewed hostile activity the old R.P. procedure had to be reintroduced, and it remained in force up to the Battalion's departure at the end of October. The tribesmen did not, indeed, commit themselves to more than casual and ineffective sniping, but it was feared that the Faqir of Ipi's influence might again stir them into action. A new era was about to dawn with the Partition of India and the birth of Pakistan as an independent state on 15th August, 1947, but Ipi himself became the declared champion of further partition: the fusion of the tribal areas on both sides of the Durand Line into a new Pathanistan (or Pushtunistan).

An air of uncertainty and suspense was bound to prevail during those last few months at Razmak. Not only was the old British-Indian Army to be split into Hindu and Moslem elements, but the Gurkha Brigade was also to be divided into two portions, one to become Imperial Troops (later The Brigade of Gurkhas in Malaya) and the other to form part of the new Indian Army. It was not officially announced until 9th August that the Gurkha Regiments selected as Imperial Troops were to be the 2nd, 6th, 7th and 10th Gurkha Rifles.

Its future status thus settled, the Battalion still remained in doubt as to when or where it would move.

It stood by in mid-September for an " emergent " move by air to Rawalpindi, and stood down again. It continued to operate up and down the R.P. sector to Razmak Narai, covering the departure of Hindu units, until finally its own turn came, at a few hours' notice, to drive out of Razmak on 30th October.

After four days in Bannu its destination was disclosed as Gurdaspur, where it detrained on 7th November under command of Major J. E. Heelis in the absence of Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Jarvis on leave.

It took more than a week, in the atmosphere of post-Partition

confusion, to discover the purpose of its move or what was to happen next. Major Heelis visited Dharmsala but found that the Regimental Centre H.Q. were no wiser about the future of British officers or when their reliefs would arrive.

The Battalion's tactical role was at last settled on 15th November. It was to take over border and L. of C. protection duties from 2/4th G.R., with H.Q. at Madhopur, on the south bank of the Ravi, north of Pathankot.

The cession of the Sialkot District to Pakistan meant the loss to India of the main Sialkot-Jammu route to Kashmir via the Banihal Pass. A new route and military L. of C. was, therefore, being rapidly developed, with a Bailey bridge over the Ravi river at Kathua (on the west bank), and thence to Jammu City itself. By 18th November the Battalion was disposed with H.Q. still at Madhopur and companies detached at Kathua and Paroi (five miles farther west), both in Jammu State.

The fates of the remaining British officers were gradually settled; some were transferred to British Gurkhas, others to the British Army, and the rest departed on release.

On 25th November Captains R. H. Limaya and V. P. Singhal and Lieutenant A. P. Mehta arrived (all from 7th Rajput Regiment) to start taking over. The same day two British officers, Captains H. K. Dodwell and J. P. Cross, departed. On the 27th eight more went: Major J. E. Heelis, Captains B. F. L. Rooney, F. E. Brookes, P. T. Prentice and J. E. Hilliard, and Lieutenants H. S. Bailey, A. M. Jenkins and J. Whitehead. Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Jarvis remained to hand over to Major R. H. Limaya, as officiating commandant, on 2nd December, and left the same day with Major F. J. G. Moorat and Lieutenant P. L. Davis, M.C. The change-over to an Indianized Gurkha Battalion was thus completed.

On the 10th December, Major M. C. Mehta arrived from the Indian Grenadiers, to be promoted Lieutenant-Colonel as the first permanent Indian Commandant.

We have yet to complete the records of the 2nd (ex-3rd) Battalion and the Centre during 1946 and 1947, but we cannot allow the dust of the 1st Battalion's hurried departure from Razmak to settle without a further word. Despite the names inflicted upon it, such as a "Frontier Folly," or "India's Whitest Elephant," Razmak had certainly become a second home for the Regiment, as earlier chapters have sought to prove. Many old soldiers will therefore be interested in what happened there,

and in Waziristan as a whole, before the end of 1947. The "repatriation" of non-Muslim units and sub-units late in October formed only a preliminary phase of what was named Operation "Curzon," after the eminent Viceroy who championed the Backward or Close-Border Policy nearly fifty years earlier.

Regular garrisons were to be withdrawn from Waziristan and replaced by reorganized Khassadars at Razmak and other forward posts, and by a strengthened Corps of Scouts in occupation of camps or forts, including Miramshah in the north and Wana and Jandola in the south. The final withdrawal from Razmak to Bannu in the middle of December was carried out by an all-Muslim force, apart from thirteen remaining British officers.

Fortunately the new policy, described in some quarters as a rash experiment, has so far (1955) been justified by the results. Ipi's influence declined; he could no longer declare a jihad, and the tribesmen in general appeared to be willing to co-operate in a reorganized Waziristan, as part and parcel of Pakistan.

THE NEW 2ND BATTALION, 1946-1947

The return of the late prisoners of war of the old 2nd Battalion during the autumn of 1945 has already been recorded in Chapter Nine. They began to reassemble in Dharmasala, after three months' leave to their homes, early in 1946. Their health had greatly improved, despite the long years of privation behind them, and most of them were eager to serve on. G.H.Q. had, however, decided that the Battalion would not be re-formed, "pending a decision about the post-war army," so the men were faced with the choice of transfer to the 3rd or 4th Battalions, or of going on pension or discharge.

The future of the 3rd and 4th Battalions was still unsettled, so it is not surprising that most of the men decided to go. The mustering-out concessions for the majority, who had not earned regular pensions, were generous; there was a shortage of manpower in Nepal; and many of the men were newly wed. Just over 200 men decided to remain, and most of the remainder had left when, in February, 1946, it was announced that the 2nd Battalion would be reconstituted from the 3rd Battalion soon after the return of the latter from overseas (Celebes).

When the 3rd Battalion reached Peshawar on 26th July it was greeted by the new Commanding Officer-elect, Lieutenant-Colonel D. J. R. Moore, who had arrived with Major C. G. Wylie and an advanced party of the volunteer cadre a week earlier.

Reconstitution Day was fixed for 15th August, when an impressive ceremonial parade was held and Lieutenant-Colonel H. G. J. Purcell handed over the Battalion to Lieutenant-Colonel D. J. R. Moore. The salute which the new 2nd Battalion gave Colonel Purcell as it marched past was more than a formal greeting; it was also an expression of personal regard and regretful farewell. The Third First had become a happy family during his year's command, and one and all were sorry to say good-bye to him.

Local commanders attended the parade, and Major-General J. Bruce-Scott, C.B., D.S.O., M.C., who served as C.O. of the 1/8th Gurkhas, alongside the old 2/1st in Razmak, sent the following letter afterwards:

"The Area Commander wishes to congratulate all ranks of 2/1st Gurkha Rifles on the very interesting and well-executed ceremonial parade on the occasion of the 3/1st Gurka Rifles being merged into 2/1st Gurkha Rifles. He would like to take this opportunity to wish the 2/1st Gurkha Rifles the very best of luck, and knows full well that the magnificent record of their Battalion, enhanced by the deeds of the 3/1st Gurkha Rifles during this war, will be maintained and continue to remain second to none in the Army.

"Lieutenant-General D. D. Gracey, C.B., C.B.E., M.C., General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Northern Command, himself an officer of the 1st Gurkhas, wishes all ranks to know how sorry he was not to be present on this memorable occasion, but his absence on duty elsewhere was unavoidable."

General Gracey also sent his personal regrets.

The reconstituted Battalion absorbed a new draft of 310 Gurkha ranks from Dharmasala, including 180 ex-prisoners-of-war from the old 2nd Battalion, to replace a similar number due for release. Further drafts were received from the 4th and 5th Battalions when these two Battalions were disbanded that autumn, but the new Battalion did not reach its full strength until the last of its war-leave parties rejoined in April, 1947.

In the meantime, heavy guard duties and Internal Security commitments kept the weak Battalion fully occupied. The latter involved frequent alarms to stand by with the civil-disturbance column in Peshawar City, and these alarms increased early in 1947. But as the time approached for the Partition of 15th August the Battalion was relieved of Internal Security and operational tasks and had more leisure to contemplate its future.

In accordance with the agreement arrived at between His Majesty's Government and the Provisional Indian Government, a Battalion committee was formed to ask all Gurkha ranks to "opt" for service with the new Indian Army or with the British Gurkhas in Malaya. The result of this was that most of the Battalion chose to remain rather than to transfer to another unit due for Malaya. The Battalion, had, indeed, acquired a family spirit by the time it left Peshawar on 30th August, 1947. Its long rail journey across the now divided Punjab led through scenes of savagery where Hindus and Muslims had been at each other's throats, but it could do little beyond rendering first aid to some of the victims at longer halts. Soon after arrival at Allahabad on 4th September, companies were detached to Bareilly and Cawnpore, but by the end of the month the Battalion was briefly reunited at Kosi Kalan, twenty-six miles north of Muttra, only to be quickly redispersed in the District.

Lieutenant-Colonel C. M. Dodkins, D.S.O., had assumed command in April when Colonel Moore departed for leave in the United Kingdom, but he in turn handed over to Major T. E. May, M.C., in August.

The first Indian officer to arrive, in October, was Captain S. C. Singha, but he was reposted to another Gurkha unit in December. Lieutenant-Colonel S. K. Korla, D.S.O., M.C. (ex-Baluch Regiment), arrived on 13th November, 1947, to take over from Major T. E. May, M.C., who left the same day. All the remaining British officers departed by 25th November, either to the United Kingdom or to British Gurkhas.

Very friendly relations had been established between the outgoing and incoming officers at the change-over, as Colonel Korla wrote later, and added: "The Battalion is looking forward to taking its full share of responsibilities in its new role as an Indianized Gurkha Battalion, and to proving that it will maintain the old traditions of an honourable inheritance."

The Battalion continued in its Internal Defence role near Muttra until it moved to Calcutta early in 1948.

THE REGIMENTAL CENTRE, 1945 TO 1947

Chapter Ten outlined the growth of the Centre during its peak period, up to the summer of 1945. Soon after Colonel N. M. Macleod had gone to Nepal (as First Secretary to the Minister) and Colonel F. M. W. Crooke, M.M., had taken his

place, on 1st May, victory in Europe was suitably celebrated and demobilization began to loom ahead.

The pre-monsoon inspection season which followed was marked by a visit from the Commander-in-Chief, India, General Sir Claude Auchinleck, who was favourably impressed by all he saw. The last visit by a C.-in-C. had been in 1927, by Field-Marshal Lord Birdwood, at a time when a permanent move from Dharmsala was under discussion, and the impression then gained was that it would take another major war to achieve this.

We shall find Dharmsala surviving the Second World War for some years, but even in 1945 plans were afoot for the grouping of the 1st and 4th Centres at Dehra Dun.

Demobilization was, however, the immediate problem, and this came to a head with victory over Japan in August. The machinery had to be turned violently into reverse to deal with the release of officers and men on a large scale and to provide re-settlement training for as many Gurkha ranks as possible before they left. This reorganization was, indeed, as complex a problem for the Centre Commander and Staff as the original expansion.

In September, 1945, the Resettlement Training Wing (later renamed the Pre-Release Company) was formed for specialized courses in cottage industries and various technical trades. Lack of land precluded much agricultural training, but rabbits were eventually persuaded to multiply, as they should, and a small duck farm was also started.

Some Centres accepted Government grants, but in Dharmsala Regimental funds were used to finance the scheme as a commercial and profit-making concern. The Pioneer Platoon provided the first specialists to train blacksmiths, tin-smiths, and carpenters. Other instructors were sent on special courses to learn weaving, basket-making and other crafts.

Hand-loom weaving proved to be the most progressive and profitable industry, with five looms turning out high-grade cloth lengths which were much in demand. This enterprise, spread over the next eighteen months and more, provided both useful training for many hundreds of men and good materials or clothes for them to take home with them.

Meanwhile, during September and October, 1945, the Demobilization Wing disposed of 1,500 recruits, nearly all of whom were most reluctant to go without seeing any Japanese. Some of them plaintively suggested that "we could easily have made the war last another two years."

A noteworthy event of 1945 was the revival of the Regimental Brass Band, which had earned such a high reputation between the World Wars. Many of the old Bandsmen had disappeared, but twenty-five assembled during the summer, and Mr. Wichman, previously Bandmaster for over thirty years, was kindly released by Nabha State to pay a three months' visit for special training. Among the surviving "Old Guard" in the Band were Havildar Nainsing Chohan, enrolled in 1890, and Lance-Naik Shamsheer Gurung, enrolled in 1891 (as a recruit boy of fourteen), both of them with Tirah medals of 1897.

The Band gradually grew in strength and skill, and in 1946 paid visits to the Battalions on the Frontier and to Calcutta, to greet troops disembarking from South-East Asia. During one visit to Peshawar it did a broadcast in the All India Radio programme. It was fortunate to have an officer of the Regiment, Captain F. J. Reed, with Kneller Hall training, to act as Director of Music during 1946-47.

The Memorial Hospital was awarded the Kettering Shield, presented annually by the National Baby Welfare Council of London, for the best Baby Welfare work of any unit in the whole of India and Ceylon for the year 1945, and repeated this success the following year. The Hospital owed much to the devoted efforts of the officers' wives, notably of Mrs. Frances Macleod (wife of Colonel N. M. Macleod), who was awarded a Kaiser-i-Hind silver medal, and of Doctor Marie Marian, who was awarded the Kaiser-i-Hind bronze medal.

An innovation introduced in 1945 was the abolition of cropped heads for Gurkhas. At the request of the Maharaja of Nepal, Gurkha ranks were permitted "to grow their hair long," though a Centre order restricted the length on top to two inches. It is a moot point whether Kilmarnock caps look as smart with the new hair style as with the old, but military fashions often have to march with the times.

During 1946 the Centre formed a reception and disposal depot for its homing units, starting with the old 2nd Battalion, as already mentioned, and others such as personnel from the disbanded Force 136 and 14th G.R. Later, in the autumn, it had to deal in turn with the disbanding 5th and 4th Battalions. British officers also passed through one after another on release from their active Battalions, were dined out, and sadly departed. The Centre eventually released close on 8,500 Gurkha ranks, including 200 Gurkha officers.

By the end of 1946 the Centre abandoned the outlying camps at Tanda and Chetru, but retained the one at Chari as a very pleasant resort for training—and bathing.

In the Cantonment itself the Tirah Lines, which had been condemned in 1938 and only patched up for the War, were finally abandoned in November, 1946—and none too soon. They were rapidly crumbling in ruins while the 5th Battalion was being disbanded in them that autumn.

Uncertainty prevailed during the first half of 1947 about the political future of India, until the D Day for Partition became known early in June.

Malaun Day, on 24th May, was celebrated as a very special occasion, with sports teams from both the Active Battalions and a round-up of local pensioners to ensure a representative Regimental reunion. It was thought likely then that Dharmsala would be abandoned before another Malaun Day came round, but in the event, as recorded in the Postscript, that fate was to be postponed for seven years.

The official announcement of the Regiment's future status as an Indianized Gurkha Regiment came only a week before the Partition date of 15th August, and confusion became worse confounded during the following months. British officers had to decide quickly whether to transfer to British Service at home, to join one of the Gurkha Regiments selected for Malaya—the 2nd, 6th, 7th, and 10th—or to “unbuckle their harness.”

A dwindling but devoted band of British officers carried on as a “caretaker crew,” while week after week passed without any sign of Indian officers arriving to relieve them.

The reign of terror which followed Partition on the Punjab plains was not expected to spread to the remote Kangra Valley with its few and isolated Muslim colonies. But by 24th August large gangs of bloodthirsty hooligans were raging up from Pathankot with fire and sword.

The Police force in the Kangra District had contained ninety per cent of Muslims before Partition, and when these were suddenly removed the skeleton left could do nothing to stem the savage invasion or to protect the hapless Muslims. Emergency military measures were put into force under the Punjab Safety Ordinance, and troops from the Centres at Bakloh, Dharmsala and Palampur were rushed to threatened points, including the Kotwali Bazaar, Yol, Nurpur, Pathankot, and even as far as Gurdaspur and Amritsar.

It was very soon found necessary to collect all the Muslim servants in Dharmasala, first in Tanglewood and then at Yol refugee camp, to await safe conduct to Pakistan. Some of these faithful retainers lost their life-time savings, often invested in small holdings in the Valley, and arrived destitute in Pakistan.

Soon after Colonel F. M. W. Crooke, M.M., departed on 26th August, after handing over to Major W. J. Winkfield, the savagery reached Dharmasala itself. The first house to go up in flames in the Kotwali was that of Fazal Din, for many years Master Tailor of the 2nd Battalion, who suffered the loss of other properties as well.

Mr. Nowrojee's shop at Macleod Ganj was saved as warning had been given and a platoon from the Centre arrived just in time. Those who remember the peaceful calm of Dharmasala's past years must find it difficult to imagine such happenings up there or even in the Valley below. Worse deeds were perpetrated down there, but they need not sully this Regimental Record.

A curfew order had to be imposed even in the Cantonments, with piquets at Forsyth Ganj and Macleod Ganj, and roving patrols elsewhere. In their servantless homes officers' wives had perforce to start pre-release training in domestic science, but without the vexations of coupons and ration books—yet to be endured.

The post and telegraph services ceased altogether and only W/T links remained with Jullundur and Lahore. It was found quicker in the end to send an officer to Delhi by road when authentic information was required, although the round trip was likely to take a fortnight. The Punjab Grand Trunk Road was still congested by the two-way movements of the unfortunate refugees, and stretches of the roadside were littered with the gruesome remains of the many victims.

During October messages from G.H.Q. expressed growing impatience with the continued presence of British officers at the Centre and pointed out the urgent necessity for their despatch either to British Gurkhas or to the vast transit camp at Deolali, where British personnel were being collected to await passages home.

With no Indian officers yet posted, Major Winkfield, in the interests of the Regiment, turned a deaf ear to these demands, but soon they became more peremptory. In effect he, and the others, were not to stand upon the order of their going, but to

go at once. Eventually, when disciplinary action was threatened, the exodus of the dozen remaining British officers and the families had to begin, but enough time had been gained for the first relieving Indian officers to appear.

Major W. J. Winkfield departed for Delhi in mid-November, leaving Major A. G. Hiatt, as the last British Centre Commander, to hand over some three weeks later to Major Keharsingh H. Rai, M.C. The latter was the senior of several Indian officers who arrived in turn to start taking over late in November. It was fortunate that two ex-Head Clerks, Lieutenants Hunarsing Kanet and Premsing Khatri, originally of the 1st and 2nd Battalions respectively and latterly in the Records Office, were still available. They were fully conversant with the administration of the Centre and proved of great help, as Adjutant and Quarter-Master, to the new cadre of Indian officers.

The British community left in successive M.T. convoys which had to run through to Delhi as the train services had not yet been restored. The first convoy, on 23rd November, took Mrs. Winkfield to join her husband in Delhi; Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Donald and their champion dogs; Miss Ada Lewin, the last of the three sisters who had made Dharmsala their home; and some of the bachelor officers. It was a sad departure for the Donalds, who had occupied Egerton Hall for thirty-two years and had become part of Dharmsala, and indeed of the Regiment too. Major and Mrs. G. E. C. Newland followed on 7th December.

With the departure of the final party, including Major and Mrs. A. G. Hiatt, on 10th December, the change-over was complete. Two days later Lieutenant-Colonel R. D. Yadava arrived to take over temporary command, but he in turn handed over to Lieutenant-Colonel D. Prem Chand on 18th January, 1948.

POSTSCRIPT

A Supplement was planned, to cover the years 1948 to 1954 in outline, but the Regiment in India have decided that the time is not yet appropriate for such a record. This postscript is confined, therefore, to certain matters of general interest and to a few important Regimental "occasions."

Some changes in titles and names followed naturally from India's new independent status. Among the first of these was the abolition of the term "V.C.O.," or Viceroy's Commissioned Officer—which also embraced "G.O.," or Gurkha Officer—in

favour of "J.C.O.," or Junior Commissioned Officer. There was no longer a Viceroy, and the term "G.O." also became anomalous when many of these worthy officers earned commissions of the higher grade, hitherto described as King's Commissioned Officers.

In February, 1949, the more strictly correct form of "Gorkha" was adopted instead of "Gurkha," as applied to the men and to the Regiment itself. When India became an Independent Republic, though still acknowledging the Sovereign as Head of the British Commonwealth of Nations, on 26th January, 1950, all Royal and similar titles, including "K.G.V's O.," were dropped. The latter title was allowed to be retained, in brackets at the end, by those who desired to use it, but officially the Regiment became simply "The 1st Gorkha Rifles."

The Brigade of Gurkhas in Malaya decided to retain the old official and customary form of "Gurkha," so the titles of the four British-Gurkha regiments were not affected.

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The much deplored but inevitable retirement of Colonel H. M. D. Shaw, D.S.O., on reaching the age of seventy on 1st September, 1948, left the Colonelcy of the Regiment vacant until nearly a year later when, with effect from 24th August, 1949, Field-Marshal Sir William Slim, G.C.B., G.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., Chief of the Imperial General Staff, was appointed Colonel.

The Centre was soon honoured and delighted to welcome the Field-Marshal when he spent one of four very busy days in India, on 18th October, 1949, on a personal visit to Dharmasala. All ranks of the Regiment, past and present, were also delighted when in March, 1953, the Field-Marshal was appointed Governor-General of Australia.

Another notable appointment, in 1949, was that of Brigadier L. P. Sen, D.S.O., as Colonel (Additional) of the Regiment from 23rd December.

On Republic Day, 26th January, of 1953, H.M. King Tribhuvana of Nepal was appointed Honorary Colonel of 1st Gorkha Rifles, having already been granted a Commission as General in the Indian Army.

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day of that year. The official date for the celebration of Amalgamation Day was, however, fixed for 15th May, 1953, and thereafter annually on that date.

Major-General W. D. A. Lentaingne, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., Colonel of the 4th Gorkhas, sent the following letter to Lieutenant-Colonel Keval Rattan, Commandant of the new 14th Gorkha Training Centre, on the occasion of the Amalgamation:

“There is a very long-standing friendship between the two Regiments due not only to their home towns Bakloh and Dharmsala being so close to each other but also to the fact that they have served together very often in war. Again, in the Dharmsala earthquake of 1905, the 4th came over the hills in twelve hours and dug out the survivors. In the past thirty years there have been frequent cross-postings of British officers between the two Regiments. To name only a few, Wylie, Cobbold, G. G. Rogers, Burgan, Graeme and Birch, all served in both Regiments. Again, many officers in one Regiment were the sons of others who served in the other Regiment. The same applies to the men who have always had relations in both Regiments, particularly the Line Boys. The two Regiments have been linked since 1923, and it is only fitting, if amalgamation of Centres had to come, that they were joined, and were not merged with other Gorkha Regiments.”

Regimental Day, which as Malaun Day had hitherto been observed on 24th May—also Empire Day—had meanwhile been changed to 24th April, which was the actual date in 1815 of the Governor-General's Order embodying the 1st Nasiri Battalion and allotting Sabathu as its first home.

Clement Town, Dehra Dun, had long been regarded as the eventual post-war home of the combined Centres, but when the move took place in November, 1954, it was to Chakrata, an old British battalion station, sixty miles from Dehra Dun and 7,300 feet above sea level. It was, indeed, an exchange of one hill-top for another, but to one with substantial stone-built barracks and good accommodation for all ranks.

The move from the old home at Dharmsala, which had been occupied for just seven years short of a century, was sadly felt by many and not least by the many old pensioners who had settled in the neighbourhood. It was a consolation to hear that neither Dharmsala nor Bakloh had been abandoned as military stations, and in happier days, when the exigencies of the service permit, Battalions may yet enjoy a tour of duty in their old stations.

APPENDIX ONE

SHORT HISTORY, 1815-1920

SALIENT EVENTS IN THE REGIMENT'S BATTLE RECORD, AND SOME OF THE IMPORTANT CHANGES IN ITS TITLE AND STYLES OF DRESS

THE Regiment was raised as Local Infantry in 1815 from the remnants of the Gurkha General Amar Sing Thapa's Army at the capitulation of Malaun Fort (in the Simla foothills). In token of their gallant resistance, Amar Sing and his men were allowed to march out with all the honours of war, and many eagerly accepted service in what was described as the 1st Nusseree Battalion. The term "nusseree" or "nasiri" was used to denote friendly or loyal. The uniform adopted was rifle green.

Its first home was at Sabathu, in the Simla Hills, but it was soon on the war-path and, like its successors of a century and more later, seldom at rest.

Its early Battle Honours were earned at Bhurtpore in 1826, and at Aliwal and Sobraon in the First Sikh War of 1846. In 1850 it assumed a Regular status when it took over the arms and colours of the mutinous 66th Native Infantry at Amritsar. It then became the 66th or Goorkha (sometimes spelt Ghoorka) Regiment, with the scarlet uniform of a Regiment of the Line.

During the Indian Mutiny it fought many actions, in one of which, in 1858, Lieutenant Tytler won the Victoria Cross, not far from Naini Tal. In the same year, as a reward for its services in the Mutiny, the Regiment was granted the title of 66th or Goorkha Light Infantry. In the reorganization of 1861 it became the 1st Goorkha Light Infantry, with scarlet tunics and white facings, and in the same year Dharmasala became its home.

In 1868 it fought at the Black Mountain (near the upper Indus) and in 1875 it went overseas—being the first Gurkha Regiment to do so—to fight in Malaya. In the following year Captain G. N. Channer won the Victoria Cross for charging a stockade near Malacca, with two riflemen, who each won the Indian Order of Merit (then the highest award for which they were eligible).

The Second Afghan War produced the Battle Honour "Afghanistan, 1878-80."

In 1886, when the 2nd Battalion was raised (at Upper Dharmasala or Bhagsu), a long controversy arose about the colour of the uniform. The Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, had noticed at the Rawalpindi Durbar of 1885 (in honour of Abdur Rahman, Amir of Afghanistan) that the 1st were the only scarlet-clad Gurkhas, and seems to have persuaded Lord Roberts of Kandahar that uniformity was desirable.

Against the wishes of the 1st Battalion, who one and all were proud of their unique distinction, the Government of India at last got its way. The two Battalions officially agreed on the re-adoption of the green uniform of 1815-50, and their title as the 1st Gurkha (Rifle) Regiment was confirmed in 1891.

The 2nd Battalion was first blooded in Sikkim in 1888, and in 1897 it took part in the large-scale Frontier operations which earned "Tirah" and "Punjab Frontier" as Battle Honours.

By 1895 both battalions were established in Upper Dharmsala (the present cantonment) and the two Officers' Messes were at last combined.

In 1901 the title became "The 1st Gurkha Rifles," with "The Malaun Regiment" (in brackets) added in 1903. The title "Prince of Wales' Own" came in 1906, changing to "King George's Own" in 1910 on the accession of King George V, and finally to "King George V's Own" in 1937.

During the First World War the 1st Battalion served in three theatres of war: France, Mesopotamia, and Palestine; and it earned fifteen hard-fought Battle Honours and forty-one gallantry decorations with a casualty list of over 1,300. After a spell of garrison duty in Syria, and at Ismailia, on the Suez Canal, it returned to Dharmsala, having spent five and a half years overseas.

The 2nd Battalion provided the Gurkha garrison of Chitral, from 1913 to 1915, and fought in N.W. Frontier Operations in 1915 and 1917, and again in the third Afghan War of 1919, gaining fifteen awards and thirteen Mentions in Despatches.

The 3rd Battalion (the only extra Battalion of the First World War) had an active first lease of life from June, 1917, to March, 1921, taking part in heavy fighting around Fort Sandeman (Zhob Valley) during the Third Afghan War. Twenty years passed before its rebirth in the Second World War.

APPENDIX TWO

COLONELS AND COMMANDING OFFICERS

COLONELS OF THE REGIMENT, 1916 TO 1948

Major-General Sir Charles H. Powell, K.C.B.	Appointed, 19th Dec., 1916. Died, 23rd Oct., 1943
Colonel H. M. D. Shaw, D.S.O.	Appointed, 27th Oct., 1944. Relinquished, 1st Sept., 1948, on reaching the age of 70

COMMANDING OFFICERS, 1921 TO 1948

1st Battalion

H. A. Holditch, D.S.O.	Aug., 1920, to Oct., 1921
H. M. D. Shaw, D.S.O.	Nov., 1921, to Nov., 1923
H. Holderness, D.S.O.	Officiating from Apr., 1923. Permanent, Dec., 1923, to Oct., 1928
M. C. Baldwin, M.C.	Oct., 1928, to Oct., 1932
J. D. Ogilvy	Oct., 1932, to Oct., 1936
W. St. J. Carpendale	Oct., 1936, to Dec., 1938
J. K. Jones, D.S.O.	Dec., 1938, to June, 1941
F. M. W. Crooke, M.M.	June, 1941, to Aug., 1944
C. H. D. Berthon	Aug., 1944, to Apr., 1945
C. E. Jarvis	Apr., 1945, to Dec., 1947
R. W. Clark	Officiating from Nov., 1945, to Mar., 1946
M. C. Mehta	Dec., 1947, to Sept., 1949

2nd Battalion

M. E. Dopping-Hepenstal, C.B.E., D.S.O. . .	Mar., 1918, to Feb., 1921
H. M. D. Shaw, D.S.O.	Officiating, May to Nov., 1920
A. E. Johnson, D.S.O.	Feb., 1921, to Mar., 1926
N. F. Graeme	Officiating, Mar. to June, 1922
M. Wylie, C.I.E.	Mar., 1926, to Mar., 1930
S. S. Whitaker, M.C.	Mar., 1930, to Mar., 1934
E. C. Mockler	Mar., 1934, to Mar., 1938
E. V. R. Bellers	Mar., 1938, to Aug., 1940
F. A. Morris	Officiating, Aug. to Oct., 1940

J. O. Fulton	..	..	..	..	..	Oct., 1940, to Feb., 1942
W. J. Winkfield	..	..	..	..	..	Officiating from 7th Jan., 1942, until Aug., 1945, in captivity

(Battalion in Japanese P.O.W. Camps, Feb., 1942, to Aug., 1945. Reconstituted from 3rd Battalion, 15th Aug., 1946)

D. J. R. Moore	..	..	..	..	..	Aug., 1946, to Apr., 1947
C. M. Dodkins, D.S.O.	..	..	..	..	..	Apr., 1947, to Aug., 1947
T. E. May, M.C.	..	..	..	..	..	Aug., 1947, to Nov., 1947
S. K. Korla, D.S.O., M.C.	..	..	..	..	..	Nov., 1947, to Oct., 1948
M. M. Ismail	..	..	..	..	..	Oct., 1948, to Sept., 1951

3rd Battalion. (Raised, 1st Oct., 1940.)

C. M. H. Wingfield, D.S.O., M.V.O.	..	..	..	..	..	Oct., 1940, to May, 1944
P. B. Keily	..	..	..	..	..	June, 1944, to Nov., 1944
G. H. W. Bond	..	..	..	..	..	Nov., 1944, to Mar., 1945
F. E. Nangle	..	..	..	..	..	Mar., 1945, to July, 1945
H. G. J. Purcell	..	..	..	..	..	July, 1945, to Aug., 1946

(Reconstituted as 2nd Battalion on 15th Aug., 1946)

4th Battalion. (Raised 15th Mar., 1941.)

N. M. Macleod	..	..	..	..	..	Mar., 1941, to July, 1943
C. H. D. Berthon	..	..	..	..	..	July, 1943, to April, 1944
I. H. Hedderwick	..	..	..	..	..	Apr. to May, 1944
D. G. T. Horsford, D.S.O.	..	..	..	..	..	May, 1944, to July, 1945
C. D. Nixon, M.C.	..	..	..	..	..	Officiating, July to Aug., 1945
A. G. Hiatt	..	..	..	..	..	Aug., 1945, to Mar., 1946
H. V. Rose	..	..	..	..	..	Mar., 1946, to Nov., 1946

(Disbanded, 30th Nov., 1946)

5th Battalion. (Raised, 1st June, 1942.)

J. L. F. O'Ferrall	..	..	..	..	..	June, 1942, to Nov., 1943
R. I. Macalpine	..	..	..	..	..	Dec., 1943, to Aug., 1945
W. J. M. Spaight	..	..	..	..	..	Aug., 1945, to May, 1946
F. A. C. Macartney	..	..	..	..	..	May, 1946, to Oct., 1946

(Disbanded, 31st Oct., 1946)

Regimental Centre, Dharmsala. (Raised, 15th Nov., 1940.)

Note.—War-time Commandants graded as Colonels from June, 1943

G. G. Rogers, M.C.	..	..	..	..	..	Nov., 1940, to July, 1943
N. M. Macleod	..	..	..	..	..	Aug., 1943, to Apr., 1945
F. M. W. Croke, M.M.	..	..	..	..	..	May, 1945, to Aug., 1947
W. J. Winkfield	..	..	..	..	..	Aug., 1947, to Nov., 1947
A. G. Hiatt	..	..	..	..	..	Dec., 1947
R. D. Yadava	..	..	..	..	..	Dec., 1947, to Jan., 1948
D. Prem Chand	..	..	..	..	..	Jan., 1948, to May, 1949

(Amalgamated with 4th G.R. Centre as 14 Gorkha Training Centre at the end of 1952; moved to Chakrata, U.P., Nov., 1954.)

APPENDIX THREE

BRITISH OFFICERS' LISTS

- A. 1921-39
 B. 1st Battalion, 1940-47
 C. 2nd Battalion, 1940-47
 D. 3rd Battalion, 1940-46
 E. 4th Battalion, 1941-46
 F. 5th Battalion, 1942-46
 G. Regimental Centre List

A. BRITISH OFFICERS WHO SERVED WITH THE REGIMENT,
 1921-39

<i>Year of Joining</i>	<i>Bn.</i>	<i>Ranks</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1900	1	Lt.-Col. (Col.)	H. M. D. Shaw, D.S.O.	C.O., Nov., 1921, to Nov., 1923. To Senior Officers' School, Apr., 1923
1900	2	Lt.-Col.	A. E. Johnson, D.S.O.	C.O., Feb., 1922, to Mar., 1926
1902	1	Lt.-Col. (Col.)	H. Holderness, D.S.O.	C.O., Dec., 1923, to Oct., 1928. To M.G. School, 1929
1904	1	Bt. Lt.-Col. (Brig.)	H. L. Scott, D.S.O., M.C.	C.O., 1/4th G.R., Mar., 1935. Also on Staff
1905	1	Lt.-Col.	M. C. Baldwin, M.C.	C.O., Oct., 1928, to Oct., 1932. To R.O., Gurkhas
1905	2	Major	C. F. M. Birch	To 4th G.R., Apr., 1925
1906	1	Major	W. B. Northey, M.C.	R.O., Gurkhas, Rtd., 1924
1908	2	Major (Lt.-Col.)	N. F. Graeme	C.O., 2/4th G.R., Nov., 1931
1908	2	Major (Lt.-Col.)	J. D. Ogilvy	1st Bn., Aug., 1927. C.O., Oct., 1932, to Oct., 1936. Also Assam Rifles
1908	1	Major	H. D. Minchinton, M.C.	Died, June, 1927
1909	2	Capt. (Major)	M. F. D. Cobbold	To 4th G.R., Feb., 1923
1909	2	Capt. (Lt.-Col.)	E. C. Mockler	Also on Staff. C.O., Mar., 1934, to Mar., 1938. Recalled to Staff, 1940

<i>Year of Joining</i>	<i>Bn.</i>	<i>Ranks</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1913	1	Capt. (Lt.-Col.)	W. St. J. Carpendale	C.O., Oct., 1936, to Dec., 1938. Also on Staff
1913	2	Capt. (Major)	G. G. Rogers, M.C.	To S.U.L., 1936
1914	1	Capt. (Lt.-Col.)	E. V. R. Bellers	C.O., 2nd Bn., Mar., 1938, to Aug., 1940. Also on the Staff.
1915	1	Capt. (Major)	L. G. W. Hamber	Also Political Dept. and Staff
1915	1	Capt. (Lt.-Col.)	D. D. Gracey, M.C.	2nd Bn., 2nd-in-Comd. 1938. C.O., 2/3rd G.R., Feb., 1939. Also on Staff
1915	1	Capt. (Lt.-Col.)	R. B. E. Upton	To 7th G.R., 1923
1915	1	Capt. (Major)	J. O. Fulton	C.O., 2nd Bn., Oct., 1940
1917	1	Capt. (Major)	S. R. Macdonald	To S.U.L., 1937
1917	1	Capt. (Major)	W. H. H. Lindquist, M.C.	To S.U.L., 1937. Also on Staff
1916	1	Capt.	J. L. Barry, M.B.E.	Died, Jan., 1924
1917	2	Capt.	G. de H. Murison	Rtd., 1927
1918	2	Capt.	C. W. L. Harvey, M.C.	To Political Dept., 1924
1917	2	Capt.	L. N. Douglas	To R.I.A.S.C., 1925
1917	2	Capt.	R. C. Milling	To R.C. Signals, 1923
1917	2	Lieut. (Major)	C. B. Lewis	Also on Staff
1917	1	Lieut. (Major)	N. M. Macleod	State Forces, 1939-40
1917	1	Lieut. (Major)	J. W. Rundall	To S.U.L., 1937
1922 (3rd G.R.)	1	Lieut. (Major)	B. S. Mould, M.C.	Also on Staff. To 1/10th G.R., July, 1940
1918	2	Lieut.	J. W. H. Harrison, M.C.	To I.A.O.C., 1922
1918	2	Lieut.	C. R. A. Meadmore	To 7th Rajput Regt., 1923
1921 (Aust. Imp. F)	2	Lieut. (Major)	F. M. W. Crooke, M.M.	To 10th G.R., 1935. Returned to 1st Bn., Sept., 1940
1921 (7th G.R.)	2	Lieut. (Capt.)	E. M. Hodder	To civil employ and S.U.L., Nov., 1935
1922 (4th G.R.)	2	Capt. (Major)	N. Burgan, M.C.	To S.U.L., 1937
1919	2	Lieut. (Major)	F. A. Morris	A.R.O., Gurkhas, Mar., 1938
	2	Lieut.	W. D. McGregor	To R.C. Sigs., 1929
1918	2	Lieut. (Major)	G. Forrest	To S.U.L., 1937. Also A.R.O., Gurkhas
1918	2	Lieut. (Major)	J. L. F. O'Ferrall	
1919	2	Lieut.	J. G. Hurrell	To 10th G.R., 1923

<i>Year of Joining</i>	<i>Bn.</i>	<i>Ranks</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1919	2	Lieut. (Major)	W. G. Gahan	Also Assam Rifles
1920	2	Lieut. (Major)	C. H. D. Berthon	To S.U.L., 1937
1922	1	2/Lieut. (Major)	A. P. Dixon	Also Assam Rifles
1923	2	Lt.-Col.	M. Wylie, C.I.E.	C.O., Mar., 1926, to Mar., 1930. To R.O., Gurkhas
(4th G.R.)				
1923	2	2/Lieut. (Capt.)	A. J. B. Sinker	To R.I.A.S.C., Sept., 1935
1925	1	2/Lieut. (Capt.)	L. J. G. Showers	Also on Staff
1926	2	2/Lieut. (Capt.)	E. T. D. Ryder	Staff College, 1940
1927	1	2/Lieut.	G. A. W. Hungerford	To R.I.A.S.C., 1928
1927	1	Capt. (Major)	V. L. Misselbrook, M.B.E.	Also on Staff
(4th G.R.)				
1928	1	2/Lieut. (Capt.)	H. R. E. Willis	To Tochi Scouts, 1939
1929	1	2/Lieut. (Capt.)	J. E. Hill	To R.I.A.S.C., Aug., 1936
1929	2	2/Lieut. (Capt.)	D. J. R. Moore	
1929	1	2/Lieut. (Capt.)	G. H. W. Bond	Also Assam Rifles
1930	2	Lt.-Col.	S. S. Whitaker, M.C.	C.O., Mar., 1930, to Mar., 1934
(7th G.R.)				
1932	1	2/Lieut. (Lieut.)	F. F. Pearson	To Political Dept., 1936
1933	1	2/Lieut. (Lieut.)	P. R. Ommanney	
1933	2	2/Lieut. (Lieut.)	H. D. H. Rance	To Political Dept., Nov., 1936
1934	1	2/Lieut. (Lieut.)	C. E. Jarvis	
1935	2	2/Lieut. (Lieut.)	H. J. St. V. de Sausmarez	
1936	1	2/Lieut. (Lieut.)	A. G. Hiatt	
1936	1	2/Lieut. (Lieut.)	J. I. Crauford-Stuart	
1936	2	Major	E. N. Jameson	To State Forces, 1939
(Seaforths)				
1936	2	Capt.	W. J. Winkfield	
(Border Regt.)				
1937	2	2/Lieut. (Lieut.)	N. P. G. O'Neal	
1937	2	2/Lieut. (Lieut.)	G. E. C. Newland, M.C.	
1937	1	2/Lieut. (Lieut.)	J. O. M. Roberts	
1938	1	Lt.-Col.	J. K. Jones	C.O., Dec., 1938, to June, 1940
(6th G.R.)				
1938	2	2/Lieut.	A. Masters	
1938	2	2/Lieut.	W. G. Seaward	
1938	1	2/Lieut.	I. Hedderwick	
1939	1	2/Lieut.	M. Latham	

The last four Regular Officers joined the Regiment early in 1940 :

2/Lieut. C. G. Wylie (2nd Bn.)	2/Lieut. R. W. Clark (1st Bn.)
2/Lieut. R. M. Lyons (1st Bn.)	2/Lieut. J. E. Heelis (2nd Bn.)

Note.—S.U.L. (Special Unemployed List) all recalled to duty after the outbreak of war in 1939 except Major G. Forrest, who joined the R.A.F. in the U.K.

B. BRITISH OFFICERS WHO SERVED WITH THE 1st BATTALION 1940-47

Lt.-Col. J. K. Jones, D.S.O.	To Bde. Comd., June, 1941
Lt.-Col. J. O. Fulton	To 2nd Bn., Oct., 1940 (C.O.)
Lt.-Col. F. M. W. Crooke, M.M. ..	C.O., June, 1941, to Aug., 1944; Centre, May, 1945
Major A. P. Dixon	To Centre, Nov., 1940; later 26th G.R. (Lt.-Col.)
Capt. P. R. Ommanney	To 3rd Bn., Oct., 1940
Major (Lt.-Col.) C. E. Jarvis	C.O., Apr., 1945, to Nov., 1947
Major (Lt.-Col.) J. I. Crauford-Stuart ..	1940-47
Major J. O. M. Roberts	To Centre, Nov., 1940; later Gurkha Para. Bn.
Major M. Latham	To 3rd Bn., Oct., 1940
Major R. W. Clark	1940-47, Offg. C.O., Nov., 1945, to Mar., 1946. To R.A., 1947
Capt. R. M. Lyons	1940; 3rd Bn., 1941-42; 5/13th F.F.R., 1943
Major E. J. C. Menzies	1940-43, Also Centre
2/Lieut. R. I. Rumsey	1940-41. To 4th Bn.
Major K. A. A. Wilson	1940-43
Lieut. D. A. Truss	1940. To 4th Bn.
Major H. Workman	1941-43. Also Centre
Major R. B. J. Deane	1941. Also Centre and Staff
Major J. L. Walter (from 3rd Bn.) ..	1941-42. Also 5th Bn. and Centre
Major P. A. O. Graham, M.C.	1941-46
Major F. J. G. Moorat (from 4th Bn.) ..	1941-47. To 7th G.R., 1947
Major S. C. Rossenrode	1941. To 5th Bn., June, 1942; 3rd Bn., 1943
Capt. F. P. Pook (from 2nd Bn.) ..	1941
Capt. K. J. F. Nixon	1941-45. Also Centre
Capt. W. H. Dawson	1941-43
Capt. G. W. F. Keen	1941-44
Capt. D. S. Jepson	1941-43. To Staff
Major J. C. G. Rennie (from 4th Bn.) ..	1942-46
Major V. O. Roberts (from 3rd Bn.) ..	1942-46
Capt. J. W. Hannaford	1942-45
Capt. R. I. Anderson	1942-46
Major J. Kirsopp-Reed	1942-46
Lieut. D. L. Antcliffe	1942-45
Major A. W. Willis	1943-46. Also Centre. To 7th G.R., 1947
Capt. R. W. Macmaster	1943-46
Capt. J. T. Lodge	1943-45. Also Centre
Capt. J. B. Peters	1943-44
Lieut. A. H. R. L. Steel	1943-44
Capt. D. M. Chambers	1943-45
Major G. Cameron-Douglas	1944-46
Capt. N. S. R. Bickers	1944
Capt. E. J. Keys	1944, 1946-47

Lt.-Col. C. H. D. Berthon	..	..	C.O., Aug., 1944, to Apr., 1945
Capt. F. E. Brookes	..	..	1945-47. To 7th G.R., 1947
Capt. S. V. H. Taylor	..	..	1945
Lieut. G. W. J. Wheatley	..	..	1945-46. Also Centre
Capt. P. T. Prentice	..	..	1945-47. To 7th G.R., 1947
Capt. J. P. Cross	..	..	1945-47. To 7th G.R., 1947

ALSO, DURING 1946-47

Majors

A. G. Hiatt. Centre, 1947
N. P. G. O'Neal. From 2nd Bn.
J. O. M. Roberts, M.C. To 2nd G.R., 1947
A. Masters. From 2nd Bn.
J. E. Heelis. From M.E. 92 (<i>see</i> List "G" below, Note 3)
F. J. Reed. Also Centre

Captains

D. Marriot-Smalley. Also Centre
H. K. Dodwell. Also Centre
F. J. Stone. From 14th G.R.
J. E. Hilliard. Also Centre
K. T. M. Walsh. Also 5th Bn. and Centre
B. F. L. Rooney. From 4th Bn.
R. P. Hoare
B. D. G. Berry. Also Centre
J. G. Geary. Also Centre

Subalterns

P. A. Harrington
E. H. Wilkie. Also 2nd Bn.
D. A. Dunford. From 14th G.R.
J. Whitehead. To 7th G.R., 1947
D. Whipp. Also Centre
R. W. Hulme. Also 5th Bn.
R. M. Leask. Also 5th Bn.
H. S. Bailey. To 7th G.R., 1947
A. M. Jenkins. To 7th G.R., 1947
G. N. Brierley
T. F. Dodd. Also 2nd Bn.
A. W. Naylor-Foote
V. W. D. Stazicker
C. B. W. Taylor. Also 2nd Bn.
P. Westley. Also 2nd Bn.
P. L. Davis, M.C. To 7th G.R., 1947
N. A. Hart
L. J. Smith

Attached Medical Officers:

Capt. A. G. Siddiqi, I.A.M.C., 1941-43, Capt. M. N. Numbiar, I.A.M.C., 1944

C. BRITISH OFFICERS WHO SERVED WITH THE 2ND BATTALION
IN INDIA, 1940-41

Major F. A. Morris	..	..	Offg. C.O., Aug.-Oct., 1940. To 4/3rd G.R. (Lt.-Col.), 1941-45. Then at Centre
Major J. L. F. O'Ferrall	..	..	To Centre and 5th Bn.
Major W. G. Gahan	..	..	To 3rd Bn., Oct., 1940
Major C. H. D. Berthon	..	..	To 4th Bn., 1941
Capt. E. T. D. Ryder	..	..	To Staff, Malaya (Major). Died, Feb., 1942
Capt. D. J. R. Moore	..	..	To Staff, Malaya (Major)
Capt. H. J. St. V. de Sausmarez	..	..	To 3rd Bn., Oct., 1940
Lieut. G. E. C. Newland, M.C.	..	..	To 3rd Bn., Oct., 1940
Lieut. A. Masters	..	..	To Staff, Malaya (Capt.)
Lieut. J. E. Heelis	..	..	To Centre, 1941. 3rd Bn. (Major), 1943
2/Lieut. (Major) W. J. Sinclair	..	..	To Centre, 1941
2/Lieut. D. H. Burnett	..	..

Lieut. J. C. de la Mare	..	..	To Staff, Malaya (Capt.)
2/Lieut. F. P. Pook	..	..	To 1st Bn.
2/Lieut. A. M. Cunningham	..	..	1941. To Centre and Staff

IN INDIA AND MALAYA, 1940-42

Lt.-Col. J. O. Fulton	..	..	C.O., Oct., 1940. Died as P.O.W., 8th Feb., 1942
Major W. J. Winkfield	..	..	Offg. C.O., 7th Jan., 1942. (Later granted rank as Lt.-Col., 1942-45, while P.O.W.)
Capt. N. P. G. O'Neal	..	..
Capt. W. G. Seaward	..	..	Died, May, 1942
Capt. C. G. Wylie	..	..	P.O.W., Jan., 1942
Capt. J. W. Chapman	..	..
Lieut. E. Palfery	..	..
2/Lieut. J. M. H. Gould	..	..	P.O.W., Dec., 1941
2/Lieut. H. P. Martin	..	..	Killed, 11th Dec., 1941
2/Lieut. J. C. Pullen	..	..
2/Lieut. F. H. H. Dominy	..	..	P.O.W., Dec., 1941
2/Lieut. E. W. Pennell	..	..
2/Lieut. J. C. Streatfeild	..	..	Died of wounds, Jan., 1942
2/Lieut. A. Williams	..	..	Killed, 7th Jan., 1942

Attached Medical Officers

Lieut B. M. Pattanayak, I.M.S.	..	..	P.O.W., Dec., 1941
Lieut. P. K. Dass, I.M.S.	..	..	1941-42

Notes

1. The following arrived with a draft for the Battalion on 7th Feb., 1942, but were posted elsewhere in Singapore: Capt. P. R. Ommanney and 2/Lieut. L. J. Smith to 2/9th G.R.; 2/Lieut. N. de V. White to the Staff.

2. The following were employed on the Staff in Malaya: Major E. T. D. Ryder (died, Feb., 1942), Major D. J. R. Moore, Capts. A. Masters and J. C. de la Mare. The last three became Ps.O.W. in Singapore, Feb., 1942.

3. Except where otherwise shown, all those on the "India and Malaya" list became Ps.O.W. after the surrender of Singapore, from 16th February, 1942, until August, 1945.

WITH THE RECONSTITUTED 2ND BATTALION FROM 15TH AUGUST, 1946

Lt.-Col. D. J. R. Moore	..	..	C.O. to Apr., 1947
Major P. R. Ommanney	..	..
Major (Lt.-Col.) C. M. Dodkins, D.S.O.	..	..	C.O., Apr. to Sept., 1947. To 1st Carabiniers
Major T. E. May, M.C.	..	..	C.O., Sept. to Nov., 1947; then to 7th G.R.
Major C. G. Wylie	..	..	To 10th G.R., 1947
Major D. H. L. Parker, M.C.	..	..	To 2nd G.R., 1947
Major C. U. Blascheck, M.C.	..	..	To 7th G.R., 1947
Major E. W. Macdonald	..	..	To 7th G.R., 1947
Major H. W. Clark	..	..	To 1st Northampton Regt., 1947
Major M. H. Kelleher	..	..

Capt. G. Trubridge	
Capt. E. Gopsill, M.C.	To 7th G.R., 1947
Capt. A. R. Pickin	To 7th G.R., 1947. (Killed in Malaya, 1948)
Capt. R. B. Garbett	
Capt. H. C. Leek	
Capt. M. Callan	
Capt. R. S. R. Carr	To 7th G.R., 1947
Capt. D. J. Coulter	

Subalterns

K. Turner	K. Checkley
J. Townsend	R. Lindsay
J. D. W. Allan	T. F. Dodd. Also 1st Bn.
P. E. C. Rattray. To 7th G.R., 1947	E. H. Wilkie. Also 1st Bn.
F. G. Fathney	G. H. P. Birch
T. J. Hayes	P. Westley. Also 1st Bn.
D. I. Macdonald	C. B. W. Taylor. Also 1st Bn.
J. S. Hay	P. J. Douglas

D. BRITISH OFFICERS WHO SERVED WITH THE 3RD BATTALION,
1940-46

Lt.-Col. C. M. H. Wingfield, D.S.O., M.V.O. (2nd G.R.)	C.O., Oct., 1940, to May, 1944. (Killed)
Major (Lt.-Col.) W. G. Gahan (2nd Bn.)	1940-41. To Pln. Comdrs'. School
Lieut. P. R. Ommanney (1st Bn.) ..	1940-41. To 2nd Bn., Malaya. Reposted 2/9th G.R.
Lieut. H. J. St. V. de Sausmarez (2nd Bn.)	1940-41. To 14th G.R. (Lt.- Col.)
Lieut. G. E. C. Newland, M.C. (2nd Bn.)	1940-41. To 4th Bn.
Lieut. (Major) M. Latham (1st Bn.) ..	1940-44. (Killed)
Major E. N. Jameson, O.B.E. (2nd Bn.)	1941-43. To Ind. Pioneer Corps (Lt.-Col.)
Major D. W. Grove, D.S.O.	1940-45. Also Centre. To 7th G.R., 1947
Major A. I. Jack	1940-45. Also 5th Bn. and Staff
Lieut. R. M. Lyons (1st Bn.)	1940-42.
Capt. H. D. Haywood	1940-42. To 4th Bn.
Lieut. F. R. G. Shephard	1940-41. To Nepalese Tps. (Lt.-Col.)
Lieut. (Major) V. O. Roberts	1940-42. To Centre and 1st Bn.
Lieut. (Major) J. L. Walter	1940-41. To 1st Bn.
Capt. J. Twells	1941-45. Also Centre
Major J. Botham	1941-42. To 5th Bn.
Capt. L. E. H. Murphy	1941-42. To R.I.A.S.C.
Capt. A. P. Newson	1941-42. To Centre
Capt. J. K. Jacomb-Hood	1941-44. (Killed)
Major R. Paine	1941-44. (Killed)
Major L. J. B. Johnson	1941-44. To Centre

Major J. Darby	1942-44. (Killed)
Major E. C. Cubbin	1942-44. (Killed)
Major L. C. Dean, M.B.E., M.C.	1942-45
Major B. W. Sutherland	1942-46
Major G. Trubridge	1942-46. To 2nd Bn.
Lieut. P. Armitage	1942-44. To 5th Bn.
2/Lieut. J. D. Rhodes	1942. To 4/2nd G.R.
Lieut. R. W. Kynoch-Shand	1942. To 5th Bn.
Lieut. P. J. Foley	1942. Also Centre and 4th Bn.
Capt. P. G. Gadd	1942-43. To Nepalese Tps.
Capt. R. D. C. Wells	1942. Also Centre
Capt. R. B. Skeoch	1942-43
Capt. H. J. Barton	1942-43. Also Centre
Major J. E. Heelis	1943-44. To Force 136 (M.E. 92). Also Centre and 2nd Bn. 7th G.R., 1947
Major C. U. Blascheck, M.C.	1943-46. To 2nd Bn. 7th G.R., 1947
Major C. V. Warren	1943. To Staff
Major S. C. Rossenrode (from 5th Bn.)	1943-45
Major M. H. Kelleher	1943-46. To 2nd Bn.
Lieut. J. D. Westlake	1943-45. To Centre
Lieut. D. M. Plenderlieth	1943-44. Also Centre. (Killed, May, 1944)
Major J. Murray, M.C.	1944-45
Major N. H. R. Hamilton	1944-46
Capt. E. D. Page	1944-45
Lieut. P. J. Douglas	1944. To 1/4th G.R. and 2nd Bn.
2/Lieut. J. G. Goldfrap	1944. To 1/7th G.R.
Capt. C. V. M. Neely	1944-46
Major F. G. T. Morcom	1944-45. (Killed)
Capt. D. C. Turner	1944-46
Lieut. D. G. Hutchings	1944-46
Lt.-Col. P. B. Keily (3/9th G.R.)	C.O., June to Nov., 1944
Major (Lt.-Col.) C. M. Dodkins, D.S.O.	1944-46. To 2nd Bn.
Lt.-Col. G. H. W. Bond (1st Bn.)	C.O., Nov., 1944, to Mar., 1945. (Killed)
Lt.-Col. F. E. Nangle	C.O., Mar. to July, 1945
Lt.-Col. H. G. J. Purcell	C.O., July, 1945, to Aug., 1946
Major E. W. Macdonald	1945-46. Also 14th G.R. and 2nd Bn.
Major E. Gopsill, M.C.	1945-46. To 2nd Bn. 7th G.R., 1947
Major P. Lynch-Garbett	1945-46. Also 14th G.R.
Capt. A. H. Webb	1945-46
Capt. A. R. Pickin	1945-46. To 2nd Bn. 7th G.R., 1947 (Killed in Malaya, 1948)
Capt. W. M. Harrison	1945-46
Capt. K. Daly	1945-46
Capt. M. Callan	1945-46. Also Centre and 2nd Bn.

Lieut. T. L. Hawkes	..	..	..	1945
Capt. R. B. Garbett	..	..	..	1945-46. To 2nd Bn.
Lieut. B. J. Crosley	..	..	..	1945. (Killed)
Lieut. T. A. Bell	..	..	..	1945. Also Centre
Lieut. H. C. Leek	..	..	..	1945-46. To 2nd Bn.
Lieut. I. T. Barclay	..	..	..	1945
Lieut. B. J. B. Galvin	..	..	..	1945-46

Attached Medical Officers

Capt. E. B. Naug, M.C., I.A.M.C.	..	..	..	1943-45
Capt. A. K. Mitra, I.A.M.C.	..	..	..	1945
Capt. N. S. Ghose, I.A.M.C.	..	..	..	1945-46

Note

The following were temporarily attached after "Red Hill," 1944 :

Lt.-Col. E. Eustace (4th G.R. and Staff)	..	..	..	29th May to 1st June
Major P. G. de P. Carey (1/4th G.R.)	..	..	..	28th May to 21st July
Major G. E. C. Newland, M.C. (153 Gurkha Para. Bn.)	..	..	..	29th May to 17th June
Major H. C. Butchard (153 Gurkha Para. Bn.)	..	..	..	1st to 7th June
Lieut. J. R. Clayton (1/4th G.R.)	..	..	..	28th May to 17th June
Lieut. G. C. Eadie (1/4th G.R.)	..	..	..	28th May to 5th June
Lieut. D. Wrigley (4/8th G.R.)	..	..	..	28th May to 20th July
Lieut. H. A. Spittler (3/3rd G.R.)	..	..	..	3rd to 22nd June
Lieut. C. B. Gilchrist (3/5th G.R.)	..	..	..	16th to 27th June

E. OFFICERS WHO SERVED WITH THE 4TH BATTALION, 1941-46

Lt.-Col. N. M. Macleod (1st Bn.)	..	..	..	C.O., Mar., 1941, to July, 1943; then Commandant at Centre (Colonel)
Lt.-Col. C. H. D. Berthon (2nd Bn.)	..	..	..	1941-44. C.O., July, 1943, to May, 1944
Major I. H. Hedderwick (1st Bn.)	..	..	..	1941-44 (Killed)
Major G. E. C. Newland, M.C. (2nd. Bn.)	..	..	..	1941. To Centre; then 153 Gurkha Para. Bn.
Lieut. A. Hunter	..	..	..	1941
2/Lieut. D. H. Burnett	..	..	..	1941
2/Lieut. R. I. Rumsey	..	..	..	1941. Instructor, O.T.S.
Capt. H. D. Haywood	..	..	..	1941-43
Lieut. B. Spiller	..	..	..	1941. To Intelligence Corps (Major)
Lieut. F. J. G. Moorat	..	..	..	1941. To 1st. Bn.
Capt. N. de V. White	..	..	..	1941. To 2nd Bn.; reposted 1946; later to R. Innis. Fus.
Capt. J. C. G. Rennie	..	..	..	1941-42. To 1st Bn.

Major H. F. Maunder	1941-45
Lieut. E. H. Browne	1941. To Staff (Lt.-Col.)
Major P. F. H. Reeve	1941-46. To R.A.
Lieut. H. R. H. Hogg	1941-42. Killed by assassin near Simla
Major D. H. L. Parker, M.C.	1941-46. To 2nd Bn.; then 2nd G.R., 1947
Major H. W. Clark	1942-46
Capt. P. G. V. Bellers	1942-45. To 1st Middx. Regt.; 2/6th G.R., 1950-53
Major I. A. May	1942-44. Also Centre.
Major T. E. May, M.C.	1942-44. Also Centre. 2nd Bn., 1946-47. To 7th G.R., 1947
Major H. W. S. Chedburn	1942-46. Also Centre
Capt. W. J. B. Anderson	1942-43
Major G. P. Careless	1942-44 (Killed)
Lieut. J. B. Cooke	1942-43
Major M. J. T. McCann	1942-44. To Centre and 14th G.R.
Capt. R. F. Gibson-Smith	1942-44 (Killed)
2/Lieut. H. J. Thompson	1942
2/Lieut. I. C. L. Yuill	1942-43. Also Staff and Centre
2/Lieut. S. V. H. Taylor	1942-43
Major R. P. C. Grantham	1942-43. To 14th G.R.
Major C. D. Nixon, M.C.	1943-45. Offg. C.O., July-Aug., 1945
Major B. F. L. Rooney	1943-46. To 2nd Bn. 7th G.R., 1947
Major J. P. Thompson	1943-44
Major W. G. Hughes, M.C.	1943-45
Lieut. S. W. Templeman, M.B.E.	1943. To Staff (Lt.-Col.)
Major Sir C. J. Nixon, Bart., M.C.	1944-45. To R. Ulster Rifles
Capt. D. G. Kilbourn	1944-45. Also Centre
Lieut. J. R. Bartlett	1944. Also Centre
Lieut. B. A. Beamand	1944 (Killed)
Major R. S. R. Carr	1944-46. To 2nd Bn. 7th G.R., 1947
Lieut. C. S. Rae	1944-45 (Killed)
2/Lieut. P. J. Ward	1944
Capt. R. P. N. Green	1944-46. (Name later changed to R. Needham)
Lt.-Col. D. G. T. Horsford, D.S.O. (8th G.R.)	C.O., May, 1944, to July, 1945
Capt. S. G. Jones	1944-45. Also 14th G.R. and Centre
Capt. R. H. Joynson	1944-45. Also Centre
Major H. G. J. Purcell	1944. To 3rd Bn. (C.O.)
Major J. R. Smith	1944-46. To 7th G.R., 1947
Major D. A. Truss	1944-45. To 2nd G.R., 1947
Lieut. E. J. Young	1944
Lieut. P. Scott	1944-46

Lieut. P. J. Foley	1945. To Staff
Lieut. C. McCalla	1945-46
Lt.-Col. A. G. Hiatt (1st Bn.) ..	1945-46. C.O., Aug., 1945, to Mar., 1946
Lieut. E. P. T. Blake	1945-46
Lieut. J. K. Dunlop	1945-46
Lieut. R. E. Murray-Duncan	1945-46 (Killed)
Capt. P. G. Harrington	1945. Also Para. Bn.
Capt. J. L. Henderson	1945-46
Capt. A. E. V. Brown	1945-46. From 5th Bn.
Lieut. S. Goldberg	1946. Also Centre
Lieut. G. N. S. Neave	1946
Lt.-Col. H. V. Rose	C.O., Mar., to Nov., 1946
Lieut. J. M. Clark	1946
Lieut. R. A. W. Reynolds	1946
Lieut. R. Fairclough	1946
Lieut. N. Macleod	1946
Lieut. J. Lindsey	1946
Lieut. J. S. Hay	1946

Attached Medical Officers

Capt. N. Choudhuri, I.A.M.C.	1944-45
Capt. H. G. Chakravarti, I.A.M.C. ..	1945-46

**F. BRITISH OFFICERS WHO SERVED WITH THE 5TH BATTALION,
1942-46**

Lt.-Col. J. L. F. O'Ferrall (2nd Bn.) ..	C.O., June, 1942, to Dec., 1943
Major V. L. Misselbrook, M.B.E. (1st Bn.)	June to Nov., 1942. To 3/8th G.R.
Major J. Botham (3rd Bn.)	1942-43. To Staff
Major J. L. Walter (1st Bn.)	1942. To Centre
Major W. F. Rogers (4th Bn.)	1942-45
Capt. S. C. Rossenrode (1st Bn.)	1942-43. To 3rd Bn.
Major P. R. Horton	1942-46
Major A. Sharples	1942-46
Lieut. R. W. Kynoch-Shand, M.C. (3rd Bn.)	1942-43. To Gurkha Para. Bn. (Killed)
2/Lieut. P. Bomford	1942. To Rhodesian Regt. Awarded M.C.
2/Lieut. R. M. Featherby	1942. To Rhodesian Regt. Awarded M.C.
Capt. D. M. Chambers	1942. To 1st Bn.
Capt. O. J. Kerr	1942-43. To 3/7th G.R.
Capt. E. W. Hunter	1942-44
Lieut. C. G. Cuff	1942-43
Major A. S. Hartley	1942-45
Major J. H. Covington	1942-46

Lieut. F. D. Stockman	1942-43
Lieut. L. B. Barber	1942-43
Capt. E. R. R. Hicks	1942-43. To Para. Bn. 7th G.R., 1947
Capt. B. C. Davies	1942-43
Lieut. H. B. Veitch	1942-43
Lt.-Col. R. I. Macalpine (3rd G.R.) ..	Jan., 1943. C.O., Dec., 1943, to Aug., 1945
Lieut. M. G. P. Charles	1943
Capt. A. F. King-Mason	1943-44. To Nepalese Tps. Also Centre
Major M. B. Horsfall (5/9th G.R.) ..	1943-45
Capt. A. E. V. Brown	1943-45. To 4th Bn.
Major A. G. Hiatt	1943-45. To 4th Bn. (C.O.)
Capt. J. W. Hooton	1944-45
Lieut. S. J. Matthews	1944-45. To Centre
Major J. M. C. Wheeler	1944-45
Major G. H. W. Bond	1944 (temp.). To 3rd Bn. (Killed)
Capt. M. H. Eggar	1944. Also Centre
Lieut. P. Armitage (From 3rd Bn.) ..	1945. Also Centre
Lt.-Col. W. J. M. Spaight (3rd G.R.) ..	C.O., Aug., 1945, to May, 1946
Major T. L. Hawkes	1945. Also Centre and 14th G.R.
Major W. I. Carney	1945-46
Major J. H. Burgess	1945-46
Capt. P. G. Morgan	1945-46
Lieut. F. H. Pouch	1945-46
Major A. I. Jack (From 3rd Bn.) ..	1945-46
Lieut. A. D. Buckell	1945-46. Centre, 1947
Lieut. F. H. Stuttard	1945-46
Lt.-Col. F. G. C. Macartney (8th G.R.) ..	C.O., May, 1946, to Oct., 1946

ALSO, DURING 1946

Major H. J. St. V. de Sausmarez ..	From 14th G.R. (Lt.-Col.)
Major G. E. C. Newland, M.C.	
Major W. G. Hughes, M.C.	
Capt. B. W. Sutherland	
Capt. K. T. M. Walsh	To 1st. Bn.
Capt. A. V. Feasey	
Capt. F. Checkley	To 7th G.R., 1947
Lieut. D. J. A. Cooper	
Lieut. G. O. Lovell	
Lieut. F. T. Morley	
Lieut. E. E. Bell	
Lieut. W. J. C. Cowan	
Lieut. R. D. Keck	
Lieut. W. J. Smyly	3/6th G.R.
Lieut. R. W. Hulme	Also 1st Bn.
Lieut. R. M. Leask	Also 1st Bn.
Lieut. R. Lindsay	Also 2nd Bn.

G. REGIMENTAL CENTRE LIST

Notes

1. This excludes officers on temporary duty or in transit, also those who served almost entirely with an Active Battalion, but includes some who served with the Centre as well as with units, as shown in brackets, and some officers of Active Battalions who held appointments in the Centre.
2. For Commandants and tenures see Appendix 2.
3. "M.E. 92" refers to the Special Gurkha Support Groups of Force 136, mentioned under "Deliverance" at the end of Chapter Nine.
4. Majors and below are in alphabetical order by ranks.

Colonels

G. G. Rogers, M.C.; N. M. Macleod and F. M. W. Crooke, M.M.

Lieutenant-Colonels

A. P. Dixon, J. L. F. O'Ferrall, F. A. Morris, C. H. D. Berthon
and W. J. Winkfield

Majors

A. N. (Amar Nath) Awasthi, O.B.I.	T. Maxtone-Moore (also Staff)
C. U. Blascheck, M.C. (3rd Bn.)	I. A. May (4th Bn.)
G. Cameron-Douglas (1st Bn.)	T. E. May, M.C. (4th Bn.). To 7th G.R., 1947
H. W. S. Chedburn (4th Bn.)	E. J. C. Menzies (1st Bn.)
R. B. J. Dane (1st Bn. and Staff)	G. E. C. Newland, M.C. (3rd and 4th Bns.; also Para. Bn.)
C. F. Goodchild (also Staff)	C. H. D. Nixon, M.C. (4th Bn.)
T. D. Govan	Sir C. J. Nixon, Bt., M.C. (4th Bn.)
R. P. C. Grantham (4th Bn.)	D. H. L. Parker, M.C. (4th Bn.). To 2nd G.R., 1947
D. W. Grove, D.S.O. (3rd Bn.). To 7th G.R., 1947	F. J. Reed (1st Bn.)
R. F. B. Gubbin (also O.T.S., Bangalore)	A. O. Shipley (14th G.R.). To R.A., 1947
J. E. Heelis (3rd Bn. and M.E. 92). To 7th G.R., 1947	W. J. Sinclair (also Assam Rifles)
A. G. Hiatt (4th Bn.)	D. A. Truss (4th Bn. and O.T.S., Bangalore). To 2nd G.R., 1947
P. R. Horton (5th Bn.)	J. L. Walter (1st Bn.)
H. Huffington	A. H. Webb (V Force and 3rd Bn.)
H. L. Humphries (also Staff)	M. T. Willis. To 7th G.R., 1947
N. W. Kennedy	H. Workman (1st Bn.)
O. J. Kerr (Para. Bn.)	
D. P. F. Lutter	

Captains

W. H. Audley (M.E. 92)	A. J. Brock
L. C. Balmer	F. E. Brookes (1st Bn.). To 7th G.R., 1947
B. D. G. Berry (1st Bn.)	J. H. Burgess (5th Bn.)
G. H. P. Birch (2nd Bn.)	J. G. Burton-Page
J. Blyth	M. Callan (2nd and 3rd Bns.)
J. A. Brelsford (14th G.R.). Died, 1945	

- W. I. Carney (5th Bn.)
 O. C. Chaplin
 F. Checkley (5th Bn.). To 7th G.R., 1947
 A. P. Coleman
 D. J. Coulter (2nd Bn.)
 P. H. Crouch
 C. G. Cuff (5th Bn.)
 P. M. Cullingford (25th G.R.)
 K. Daly (3rd Bn.)
 S. J. Davies
 H. K. Dodwell (1st Bn.)
 M. H. Eggar (5th Bn.)
 R. Elder (Signal School)
 J. S. W. Fairbairn
 A. V. Feasey (5th Bn.)
 J. P. J. Fogarty
 G. W. Foskett (Para. Bn.)
 P. L. Garbett (3rd Bn. and 14th G.R.)
 J. G. Geary (1st Bn.)
 E. Gopsill, M.C. (3rd Bn.). To 7th G.R., 1947
 R. P. N. Green (4th Bn.)
 A. P. Harding
 N. R. H. Hamilton (3rd Bn.)
 P. G. Harrington (4th Bn.)
 W. M. Harrison (3rd Bn.)
 A. S. Hartley (5th Bn.)
 A. S. Harvey, M.C. To 6th G.R., 1947
 T. L. Hawkes (14th G.R. and 5th Bn.)
 J. L. Henderson (4th Bn.)
 E. R. R. Hicks (5th Bn. and Para Bn.). To 7th G.R., 1947
 J. E. Hilliard (5th Bn. Also Tochi Scouts and Zhob Militia)
 R. P. Hoare (1st Bn.)
 F. F. Holmes. To 7th G.R., 1947
 W. R. L. Hume
 L. B. J. Johnson (3rd Bn.)
 R. A. Jones (14th G.R.)
 S. G. Jones (14th G.R. and 4th Bn.)
 R. H. Joynson (4th Bn.)
 H. S. (Hunarsing) Kanet
 J. C. D. Law-Marshall
 H. C. Leek (3rd Bn.)
 J. T. Lodge (1st Bn.)
 B. H. Ledger
 H. W. Lovell, M.B.E. (25th G.R.)
 R. J. B. Macarthy (4th Bn.)
 E. W. Macdonald (2nd and 3rd Bns.). To 7th G.R., 1947
 H. H. Milchem
 P. Morcom (3rd Bn.). Killed in action
 J. Murray, M.C. (3rd Bn.)
 A. P. Newson (3rd Bn.)
 K. J. F. Nixon (1st Bn.)
 T. H. Oglesby (Para. Bn.)
 R. A. Baird-Orr (26th G.R.). To 2nd G.R., 1947
 R. A. Perry
 A. R. Pickin (3rd Bn.). To 7th G.R., 1947. Killed in action, 1948 (Malaya)
 J. G. M. Prescott (M.E. 92)
 R. Redfern
 A. M. Rice
 E. A. Richardson (State Forces)
 M. W. Ruffhead
 N. W. Sanderson (Para. Bn.). To 7th G.R., 1947
 M. Scott (also I.M.A., Dehra Dun)
 P. Scott (4th Bn. and 14th G.R.)
 F. J. Stone (1st Bn. and 14th G.R.)
 E. W. J. Shaw
 A. T. Thomas
 L. F. Tomlin
 D. C. Turner (3rd Bn.)
 J. Twells (3rd Bn.)
 F. J. A. Waller
 K. T. M. Walsh (14th G.R., 1st and 5th Bns.)
 T. Watts. To 7th G.R., 1947
 R. D. C. Wells (3rd Bn.)
 J. D. Westlake (3rd Bn.)
 N. de V. White (2nd and 4th Bns.)
 A. W. Willis (1st Bn.)
 N. D. Wise
 M. J. Wright (also Staff)
 R. L. Wyer

Subalterns

- D. L. Antcliffe (1st Bn.)
 P. Armitage (3rd and 5th Bns.)
 H. S. Bailey (1st Bn.). To 7th G.R., 1947
 J. M. Barstow
 J. R. Bartlett (4th Bn.)
 H. J. Barton (3rd Bn.; also Staff)
 B. A. Beamand (4th Bn.). Killed in action
 T. A. Bell (3rd Bn.)

- E. P. T. Blake (4th Bn.)
A. D. Buckell (5th Bn.)
J. P. Campigli (Para. Bn.)
G. W. Charlton
W. L. Ching
J. M. Clark (4th Bn.)
C. E. H. Coles
W. J. C. Cowan (5th Bn.)
J. P. Cross (1st Bn.). To 7th G.R., 1947
E. Crozier. Died, 1946
A. M. Cunningham (also Staff)
B. C. Davies (5th Bn.)
J. W. Deekes
E. M. Dickenson
P. J. Douglas (3rd and 4th Bns.; also
1/4th G.R.)
R. D. S. Drew-Smythe (also Staff,
Remounts)
D. A. Dunford (1st Bn. and 14th G.R.)
S. Easthope (also Staff)
J. G. Fethney
P. J. Foley (3rd Bn.)
B. J. B. Galvin (3rd Bn.)
P. A. Garbett
S. J. Goldberg (4th Bn.)
I. M. Grant
V. A. Grantham
A. W. Gosling
P. J. H. Gross
R. P. Harding (also Staff)
N. A. Hart (1st Bn.)
J. S. Hay (4th Bn.)
T. J. Hayes (2nd Bn.)
J. W. Hooton (5th Bn.)
G. M. Humphries
A. M. Jenkins (1st Bn.)
A. F. King-Mason (5th Bn.)
D. G. Kilbourn (4th Bn.)
D. F. Laing
R. M. Leask (1st and 5th Bns.)
D. M. Little (Para. Bn.)
I. N. Macleod
C. McCalla (4th Bn.)
D. I. McDonald (2nd Bn.)
D. Marriott-Smalley (1st Bn.)
P. Marlow
N. P. Martin
G. F. Marriner
S. J. Matthews (5th Bn.)
A. I. Middlemass
V. A. Miller
P. G. Morgan (5th Bn.)
A. Munn
A. W. Naylor-Foote (1st Bn.)
G. N. S. Neave (4th Bn.)
L. G. Nixon
G. J. Page (14th G.R.)
J. P. Phillips (Para. Bn.)
D. M. Plenderlieth (3rd Bn.). Killed
in action, May, 1944
P. T. Prentice. To 7th G.R., 1947
F. H. Pouch
P. S. (Prem Sing) Khatri
P. E. C. Rattray (2nd Bn.). To 7th
G.R., 1947
R. A. W. Reynolds (4th Bn.)
C. N. Richards
F. R. Skirton
J. R. Smith (4th Bn.). To 7th G.R.,
1947
L. J. Smith (1st Bn.)
F. J. Squire
C. B. Stanley
W. F. R. Steward (Para. Bn.)
M. L. Stuart
P. W. Sweeney
J. S. Tapster
C. B. W. Taylor (1st and 2nd Bns.)
J. Townsend (2nd Bn.)
T. G. Tyson
R. F. Underwood
H. B. Veitch (5th Bn.)
H. E. Ward
P. J. Ward
P. Westley (1st and 2nd Bns.)
G. W. J. Wheatley (1st Bn.)
J. Whitehead (1st Bn.). To 7th G.R.,
1947
D. Whipp (1st Bn.)
P. Whitsun-Jones
E. H. Wilkie (2nd Bn.)
J. D. Woodhead
D. B. Wright
I. C. L. Yuill (4th Bn.)

APPENDIX FOUR

BEHIND THE JAPANESE IN MALAYA

Stories of Separated Men, 2nd Battalion

1. SUBEDAR BUDHILAL GURUNG'S STORY : FROM ASUN TO IPOH

Chapter Five of the narrative has described how Subedar Budhilal Gurung, Jemadar Panchkar Gurung and twenty men from " B " Company fought their way out of Japanese encirclement north of Asun on 11th December, 1941, and joined the extreme eastern, and isolated, flank company of 2/9th Jats on the Jitra position next day.

Subedar Budhilal takes up the story himself :

" The Company Commander said we might be required and had better stay with him. Here I collected more men coming back from Asun and eventually had sixty-one, which I made into a two-platoon company. We took over part of the Jat defensive position. The Jat Bn. H.Q. withdrew during the night 12th/13th unknown to the Company I was with. The Company Commander then collected extra arms and ammunition from the late Bn. H.Q. position so that we would be stronger. About 1530 hours on the 13th the Company Commander called all officers to a conference, said we were cut off, and asked our advice. I, being senior V.C.O., spoke first and said, ' Hold this place to the last round and last man. When our troops counter-attack we will be able to help them a lot.' This was agreed to, but later orders were given to move off with only light equipment. My men refused to leave anything except their respirators. I think we must have had a fifth columnist in the force as we were ambushed soon after we moved. This action broke up the force and I continued south with twenty-one men. A day or so later we ran into an ambush of mixed Malays and Japs and had a sharp action (near Sungei Patani). Jemadar Panchakar Gurung was next to me and we were fighting at about ten yards' range. He emptied his revolver at the Japs and whilst reloading was killed by a bullet in the chest. I and two men got out of this and we continued south. Some Chinese gave us clothes and we did a few hours working under Japanese on a bridge. We escaped and picked up one more man. On 26th December we again caught up with our troops, found the 2/9th Jats in a defensive position about six miles from Ipoh, and rejoined the Battalion on the Kampar position on the 29th."

Subedar Budhilal and his small party had covered 200 miles behind the Japanese lines in fifteen days. His modest story does scant justice to his gallantry and resource. He had already won an I.D.S.M. with the Battalion in Waziristan in December, 1938 (see page 48), and was later to earn an O.B.I. (2nd Class) for outstanding services and loyalty while a prisoner of war.

2. 2ND/LIEUTENANT J. M. H. GOULD'S STORY : FROM ASUN TO PENANG

After describing the action culminating in his break-out at 1930 hours (11th December, 1941) Gould continues :

“ ‘C’ Company moved south to try and link up with ‘A’ and Bn. H.Q. I had neither map nor compass as the Battalion was very short of these. We could not take the direct route of the morning as this led over open ground in full view of the enemy, so we took a jungle path. By this time it was pitch dark and had come on to rain heavily once again. The undergrowth became thicker and after a while I discovered we were going round in a circle, so I ordered the Company to halt in a clearing and wait until daylight. We moved on at about 0430 hours on the 12th December. My intention was to try to get through the Jap lines on to the main road, and failing this to work round to the west flank, moving south, and see if there were any loop-holes over there. During the morning No. 14 Platoon, with Subedar Dilbahadur, disappeared. After finding no success on the main road I moved over to the Koding Road. I found it equally well blocked by Japs. Over this area it was far more open with only odd patches of jungle dotted here and there. At 1500 hours I came on No. 14 platoon again less Subedar Dilbahadur and his orderly, who had got through to our lines. No. 14 platoon had very nearly got through when the Japs spotted them and opened mortar fire on them. They retreated and it was while they were debating what to do that I came upon them. Naik Agam was wounded in the thigh during this skirmish. The Japs had now located us and started mortaring our position. I decided that the only thing to do was to get on some high ground to see the best possible way of getting out. There was a big hill near by, Bukit Tunjang, and I decided to make for it. We reached the top about 1800 hrs. From here I got a beautiful view. One thing we learnt from the Japs was that, apart from the near vicinity of roads and possibly the railway, they did not worry. We decided to make for a very prominent hill on the right of the railway and situated by itself in a sheet of paddy, known as Gmong Keriang, or Elephant Hill. After spending the night on top of the first hill (north-west of Jitra) we set out at daybreak the next day, the 13th of December, 1941. By this time several men had got lost, including Jemadar Harakbahadur (15 Pl.). We made the railway at about 1000 hours and it was here that I met Lieutenant Dominy with a few of his carrier platoon and one or two from ‘B’ Company. He had been attached to the 1/14th Punjabis when the Jap tanks broke through on the evening of the 11th December. After carefully hiding his carriers he made off into the jungle with a view to trying to join the Battalion farther south. Fortunately he had a map of the area. We decided to continue with the original plan, namely, make for Elephant Hill. From the map it could be seen that a road went from it into Alor Star. However, owing to recent rains and the paddy land we found the going extremely heavy and frequently found ourselves wading up to our waists, so our progress was extremely slow. We eventually made Elephant Hill on the 14th December at 1000 hours.

“ We were told by villagers that Alor Star had fallen that morning at 0600 hours, so we kept to the paddy and moved south. The going now became very much easier as many troops from the Jitra lines had passed through this way the night before. By this time, apart from our own men, there were sepoys from 2/16th Punjab, 1/14th Punjab, 1/8th Punjab and 2/9th Jats. We were now making for Kuala Kedah, the port of Alor Star. Apart from one Jap plane which machine-gunned us (no casualties) nothing happened until we reached Kuala Kedah at 2000 hours on the 14th December. After crossing the river we went up the road towards Alor Star with a view to turning south again along the pipeline. This runs parallel with the road to Sungei Patani only very much nearer the coast. During this night C.H.M. Hastbir, Havildar Danbahadur

(15 platoon) and one or two others got lost. [They managed to get back to the Battalion at Gurun. C.H.M. Hastbir was again separated after the Slim battle (see his story below, paragraph 4)].

“On the morning of the 15th December, 1941, we were joined by seven British troops of the Leicesters. We decided to make for the coast and get a boat. At 1400 hours we made the little fishing village of Sala, got a boat, and set sail for Penang at about 1700 hours the same day. Excellent progress was made during the night. Unfortunately, at about 0200 hours on the 16th December, whilst off the northern entrance of the Penang roads, our boom struck a fishing-post in the water, which made our boat jib badly, and the mainmast broke. The boatmen refused to go on and so we tied up to a fishing-post for the rest of the night and the next morning went into a little fishing village to get the mainmast repaired. We again set sail for Penang at 1100 hours on the 16th December. There was no breeze at all that day and so we made little progress. Jap planes were coming over frequently and there was a heavy raid on the Penang roads that afternoon at 1500 hours. The wind freshened towards evening as we approached Penang. At 2000 hours a violent storm struck us accompanied by driving rain. It was decided to anchor for the night as it was too risky to venture close to the shore in this weather. We eventually landed near Penang swimming-pool at 1000 hours on the 17th December and found that Penang had been evacuated and that the Japs were at Butterworth, controlling the roads and about to come over. We decided as a result to remain where we were during that day and at nightfall to sail around Penang Island and put in at some port farther south. As luck would have it the boatmen disappeared during the day. There was nothing for it but to march across the island and see if we could get a boat on the south coast of the island. We set out on the evening of the 17th December. At about 2300 hours a Chinese volunteer force stopped us and informed us that a major was at Police H.Q. and was arranging to get all troops evacuated from there.

“We arrived there and were given refreshments, but had to wait until 0400 hours on the 18th December before the major turned up. He related how he had been in touch with the committee then running the island, and he gave us an order not to try and escape. His reasons were three-fold: (1) The town was out of control and looting was going on everywhere. He considered the presence of Europeans on the Island would have a sobering effect on the local populace; (2) If the local populace helped us to escape then the Japanese would take reprisals on those that helped us (it must be remembered that at this time seventy Japanese internees were still in Penang jail); (3) There were about seventy Indian Army personnel and the same number of British personnel. The major considered that there were insufficient boats to take us all off and so it would be fairer if we all remained. The Japanese landed on Penang Island on the night of the 18th December, 1941, and the following day at 1400 hours segregated white troops and officers from Indians. They sent us to Penang jail at once. Of the 2/1st Gurkha Rifles, thirty-nine were captured here, including Jemadar Jasbahadur Rana, I.D.S.M.”

3. No. 6582 NAIK NAKAM GURUNG'S STORY

“On 7th January, 1942, our Battalion was surrounded by the Japanese in the Ipoh area (Slim River disaster). I escaped in a party which included the Subedar-Major Dalbahadur Gurung, Subedar Maniraj Thapa and fifty-six G.O.Rs.

" We intended to reach Singapore travelling only through the jungle. The villagers gave us food on our journey. After about twenty-five days we reached the Jementah area. At this point I was suffering from a very severe attack of malaria. The Subedar-Major told me to stay until the end of the war, as they were unable to take me with them due to my sickness. He also told me to return to the Battalion when the Japanese had been defeated. They left me enough rations for three months.

" After a month I recovered from the attack of malaria. I made a small shack for myself in the jungle and planted crops near my home in the jungle (there were a number of deserted houses in that area on the jungle edge). I made traps for catching pig and caught fish; I was unable to obtain any salt and I ate no salt from 1942 until I was found by a patrol of Gurkhas on 20th October, 1949.

" From time to time one or two Chinese met me; they always told me that if I left the jungle I would be killed by the Japanese.

" During the last year or two I was also told the same by various Chinese that I met, so I never left the jungle. When I was met by a patrol of the 1/10th Gurkha Rifles on the 20th October, 1949, I was still under the impression that the war was still continuing."

Note: It is pleasant to record that after his return to India, Naik Nakam was not only reinstated and promoted in his old unit, but was also granted full back pay for his years of lonely exile.

4. No. 6694 C.H.M. HASTBIR GURUNG'S STORY

" Six of us went into the jungle after the Slim River disaster. After wandering for about six days, we got into a Jap ambush near Kuala Lumpur. Four of us escaped, but 7865 Rifleman Dhanbahadur Gurung and Narbahadur Thapa were caught, tied with their backs to trees, made to bend down and were shot at and cut with swords. Narbahadur was killed and Dhanbahadur lost consciousness. When he came to he managed to get away from the tree and went along the road. He found us again and we put him in the civil hospital. He had, of course, several minor injuries, but his bad ones were three deep sword cuts across the neck and back and a bullet wound in the chest. He is still stiff, but has almost recovered and has now gone on leave (1945)."

5. No. 7306 L./NAIK NARBAHADUR THAPA'S STORY

" I was put into Peletar Camp, where there were no other Gurkhas but a lot of Sikhs, Jats and other Indian troops. I remained here as a prisoner for a month. At the end of this month I met a Gurkha (just outside the camp). He was called Jitbahadur Kamcha, village Galdung Dhuwan Besi, Palpa, about a day or a day and a half's march east of my own village. He told me that there were British, Gurkhas and Indians with Chinese living in the jungles in Malaya, and were raiding the Japs. He suggested that I should go with him and join them, which I did. He led the way to Mountain Estate, nine miles from Johore Bahru on the Kota Tinggi Road. Here Jitbahadur got into contact with Chinese guerillas. After some time they did a raid and stole some Japanese army buffaloes, and we went away with them.

" We marched all night through the jungle, then we stopped, had tea, killed a buffalo and ate it. We then went on and marched to a place called Tenki (thirty miles north of Johore Bahru). This was a kind of rest camp for visitors and anyone passing through. The actual H.Q., Government, was five or six miles away in the jungle. We used to go there for lectures and conferences,

and I saw and spoke to four Englishmen there. We enlisted in the guerilla force and it was explained to us that sometimes we would be soldiers, sometimes farmers, sometimes coolies and so on.

"Jitbahadur and I stayed here for eight months performing all duties—sentry and working parties. We were part of the local defence unit (Duty Company). I never went on any raids from here. I never saw any Indian troops here at all.

"After eight months the Japs bombed and machine-gunned Tenki from the air (thirty bombs), but caused no casualties even among the villagers, who all had shelters in the surrounding jungles. Three days later Jap troops (about 6,000) came to the village. The villagers were warned by the Chinese to clear out and disappear into the jungle. We split up into our respective parties and disappeared also. Some sections were detailed to watch the Japs. My section was taken about four miles away into the hills. We used to make our way into the village at nights to get food from our stores (going between Jap piquets) and by day we lay up in the jungle. This continued for about two months. I never went out on any raids.

"I never met any parachutists, but from about May or June, 1945, stores were received by parachute. The planes came over at night, and at first we had no idea whose planes they were. Ammunition, food, arms (including American automatic rifles and Sten guns) and clothing were dropped, and we used to go out to bring them into H.Q.

"There was also a wireless set, though I only heard of this in about May or June, 1945. I heard of the Jap surrender on 14th August, 1945, over the wireless. By this time everyone had been armed by air and everything was ready to make a big attack on the Japs. Even women were armed. There were six Malays with us, but apart from them and Jitbahadur and I, all the rest were Chinese. We were waiting for orders from outside to start. When we heard of the peace, there was tremendous rejoicing."

6. THE STORY OF RIFLEMAN SHIAMLAL BURA, I.D.S.M.

No. 1467 Rifleman Shiamlal Bura, who won an I.D.S.M. in 1939 with the 1st Battalion in Waziristan, was hit in the forearm at Slim by a burst of machine-gun fire and his forearm was almost severed. He realized that it was useless and would only do him harm, so he asked Jemadar Udbar Gurung to cut it off. Udbar disliked the idea and so Shiamlal took out his kukri and performed the "operation" himself. Afterwards he was in the jungle for fifteen days without medical attention. In order to prevent gangrene he put the stump into creosote found in a latrine. He gave himself up at Kuala Lumpur, where he received medical aid. Eventually the arm was amputated just below the shoulder, and he survived.

7. No. 8001 RIFLEMAN MAKANSING GURUNG'S ADVENTURES

"On 7th January, 1941, I was with my company marching down the road near Slim River, when the tanks came. We went into the jungle. I was with Captain Wylie. That evening we came to a road and were trying to cross the river when more enemy tanks came and I was separated from Captain Wylie, though I was with a party of G.O.Rs. and I.O.Rs. Thereafter we marched through rubber and jungle southwards, finally arriving at Labis (twenty miles south-east of Segamat) after thirty days. We saw many Japs from a distance, but none of our own troops. One night the whole party left again at about mid-

night, leaving me and two others. A day later we were chased by Malays and we went into the jungle, where I lost touch with the other two and was thereafter by myself. I still had my rifle and equipment at this time. One evening I arrived at a rubber estate, where the Tamils gave me civilian clothes. I went on, and when I got near Kuala Lumpur, realizing it was full of Japs, I by-passed it and went on southwards. There was no one at Segamat when I arrived there and so I went on and finally reached Labis, where the Madrassis told me that Singapore had fallen and advised me not to go on but to go back to Kuala Lumpur, where there were plenty of Gurkhas. I spent three days about fourteen miles from Segamat by myself with no food. I tried to find some Gurkhas but failed.

“Some Japs appeared while I was here and I went off again about five miles through the rubber. There I met a Chinese called Eo Hoon, with whom I stayed until September, 1945, helping him grow tapioca. No Japs ever came here and the Chinese told me to keep out of their town. He paid me dollars 50.0 per month in return for my work, and fed me also.”

APPENDIX FIVE

ROLL OF HONOUR, 1939-1946

*“ At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,
We will remember them.”*

KILLED IN ACTION OR DIED OF WOUNDS

1ST BATTALION

Jem. Chamu Thapa 11th May, 1945, Burma
32 Gurkha other ranks

2ND BATTALION

Lt.-Col. J. O. Fulton 8th Feb., 1942, Taiping. P.O.W.
(wounded 7th Jan., 1942, Slim
River)
2/Lieut. N. P. Martin 11th Dec., 1941, Asun
2/Lieut. A. Williams 7th Jan., 1942, Slim River
Jem. Panchakar Gurung 20th Dec., 1941, Sungei Patani
Jem. Narbahadur Thapa 7th Jan., 1942, Slim River
Jem. Bagbir Gurung Sept., 1944, New Britain. P.O.W.

Missing, presumed Killed at Sea with Official Escape Party

Major E. T. D. Ryder 15th Feb., 1942, or after, near
Singapore

Died as P.O.W. or in Malaya Jungle

Capt. W. G. Seaward May, 1942, Titi, near Seremban
Lieut. J. C. Streatfeild Jan., 1942
Sub.-Major Dalbahadur Gurung Nov., 1942, with Chinese gueril-
las
Jem. Amarbahadur Gurung Jan., 1942
188 Gurkha other ranks

3RD BATTALION

Lt.-Col. C. M. H. Wingfield, D.S.O.,
M.V.O. 28th May, 1944, Red Hill, near
Imphal
Lt.-Col. G. H. W. Bond 19th March, 1945, near Kyaukse
Major J. L. Goldney 11th May, 1944, Shenam
Major M. Latham 11th May, 1944, Shenam
Major F. T. G. Morcom 23rd March, 1945, near Kyaukse
Capt. E. C. Cubbin 29th Mar., 1944, Ralph Hill
Capt. J. Darby 28th May, 1944, Red Hill
Capt. J. K. Jacomb-Hood 29th May, 1944, Red Hill

Capt. R. Paine	..	..	..	8th July, 1944, near Ukhrul
Lieut. D. M. Plenderlieth	..	..	..	28th May, 1944, Red Hill
Lieut. B. J. Crosley	..	..	..	9th May, 1945, near Sitsaba
Sub. Kulbahadur Gurung	..	..	..	28th May, 1944, Red Hill
Jem. Karbir Thapa	..	..	..	11th May, 1944, Shenam
Jem. Jagbir Thapa	..	..	..	4th Feb., 1945, Nabet

168 Gurkha other ranks

4TH BATTALION

Lt.-Col. I. H. Hedderwick	..	..	..	7th May, 1944, Kohima
Capt. G. P. Careless	..	..	..	17th Feb., 1944, Arakan
Capt. R. F. Gibson-Smith	..	..	..	7th May, 1944, Kohima
Lieut. B. A. Beamand	..	..	..	11th May, 1944, Kohima
Lieut. C. S. Rae	..	..	..	17th May, 1945, near Zalon
Lieut. R. E. Murray-Duncan	..	..	..	20th Mar., 1946, Malaya
Jem. Bahasur Thapa	..	..	..	27th Feb., 1945, Burma

161 Gurkha other ranks

5TH BATTALION

Capt. R. W. Kynoch-Shand, M.C.	1st May, 1945, Rangoon with 153 Gurkha Para. Bn.
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1 Gurkha other rank

APPENDIX SIX

SUMMARY OF CASUALTIES, SECOND WORLD WAR
(AND FAR EAST, 1945-1946)

		<i>Killed in Action or Died of Wounds</i>	<i>Missing presumed Killed</i>	<i>Died in Captivity</i>	<i>Total Wound- Dead</i>	<i>ed</i>
<i>1st Battalion</i>						
British officers	.. ..	—	—	—	—	—
Gurkha officers	.. ..	1	—	—	1	3
Gurkha O.Rs. & N.C.(E)s.		32	—	—	32	54
<i>2nd Battalion</i>						
British officers	.. ..	3	1	2	6	—
Gurkha officers	.. ..	3	—	2	5	6
Gurkha O.Rs. & N.C.(E)s.		8	104	76	188	62
<i>3rd Battalion</i>						
British officers	.. ..	11	—	—	11	12
Gurkha officers	.. ..	2	1	—	3	17
Gurkha O.Rs. & N.C.(E)s.		146	22	—	168	437
<i>4th Battalion</i>						
British officers	.. ..	6	—	—	6	7
Gurkha officers	.. ..	1	—	—	1	10
Gurkha O.Rs. & N.C.(E)s.		161	—	—	161	382
<i>5th Battalion</i>						
British officers	.. ..	1	—	—	1	—
Gurkha O.Rs.	.. ..	1	—	—	1	4

Notes

1. N.C.(E)s.: Non-Combatants Enrolled.
2. Figures for wounded, 3rd and 4th Battalions, are of actual individuals wounded. Nearly 100 were wounded twice, and some three times, so cumulative figures by actions or campaigns, as given in the text, exceed these totals.

REGIMENTAL TOTALS

		<i>Killed</i>	<i>Wounded</i>
BRITISH OFFICERS	.. ..	24	19
GURKHA OFFICERS	.. ..	10	36
GURKHA OTHER RANKS	.. ..	550	939
		<hr/> 584	<hr/> 994

APPENDIX SEVEN

LIST OF HONOURS AND AWARDS
FOR THE SECOND WORLD WAR

C.B. and C.B.E.

Major-General D. D. Gracey, M.C. . . . Later General Sir Douglas
Gracey, K.C.B., K.C.I.E.,
C.B.E., M.C., C-in-C.,
Pakistan

C.I.E.

Major-General B. S. Mould, D.S.O., Bde. Comd.
O.B.E., M.C.

D.S.O.

1st Battalion

Major-General B. S. Mould, C.I.E., Bde. Comd.
O.B.E., M.C.
Brig. J. K. Jones Bde. Comd.
Lt.-Col. L. J. G. Showers With 2nd G.R.

3rd Battalion

Lt.-Col. C. M. H. Wingfield, M.V.O.
Major C. M. Dodkins
Major D. W. Grove

4th Battalion

Lt.-Col. D. G. T. Horsford Also Bar to D.S.O.

O.B.E.

1st Battalion

Brig. B. S. Mould, M.C. Staff
Brig. W. H. H. Lindquist, M.C. Staff
Lt.-Col. V. L. Misselbrook, M.B.E. Staff

2nd Battalion

Brig. C. B. Lewis Staff
Lt.-Col. E. N. Jameson Indian Pioneer Corps

M.B.E.

1st Battalion

Brig. W. H. H. Lindquist, M.C. † Staff
Sub. Major Premsing Rana, O.B.I. Hony. Captain

2nd Battalion

Major A. M. Cunningham	..	..	Staff
Sub. Jitbahadur Gurung			
Sub. Manbahadur Gurung	Malaya, Force 136

3rd Battalion

Major L. C. Dean, M.C.

4th Battalion

Lt.-Col. S. W. Templeman	Staff
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5th Battalion

Sub. Ramkishan Thapa

Regimental Centre

Capt. H. W. Lovell	25 G.R.
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*M.C.**1st Battalion*

Capt. J. O. M. Roberts	153 (Gurkha) Para Bn.	
Major P. A. O. Graham				
Sub. Aibar Thapa				
Lieut. P. L. Davis	N.W.F., 1947

3rd Battalion

Major C. U. Blascheck	..	..	Also Bar to M.C.
Jem. Dharmasing Thapa			
Sub. Bhadrabir Thapa			
Capt. J. Murray			
Major L. C. Dean, M.B.E.			
Sub. Kalu Gurung			
Sub. Puranbahadur Gurung			
Major E. Gopsill			
Capt. E. B. Naug, I.A.M.C.	..	..	Attached Medical Officer

4th Battalion

Major T. E. May
 Major C. D. Nixon
 Sub. Danbahadur Rana
 Sub. Narjang Ghale
 Sub. Patiram Gurung
 Sub. Karnasing Ghale
 Major Sir C. J. Nixon, Bart.
 Sub. Lachhiman Thapa
 Sub. Partabsing Thapa
 Major D. H. L. Parker
 Major W. G. Hughes

5th Battalion

Lieut. R. M. Featherby	..	..	Rhodesia Regt.
Lieut. P. Bomford	..	..	Rhodesia Regt.
Lieut. R. W. Kynoch-Shand	..	..	153 (Gurkha) Para Bn.

*I.O.M.**2nd Battalion*

Hav. Manbahadur Gurung

*3rd Battalion*Sub. Ramsaran Pun Later Sub.-Major Hony. Cap t.
O.B.I.*4th Battalion*

Naik Tejbahadur Thapa

*B.E.M.**1st Battalion*

Hav. Shivbahadursing Khanka

5th Battalion

Hav. Karnabahadur Thapa

Regimental Centre

Rfn. Manbahadur Thapa

*I.D.S.M.**3rd Battalion*Rfn. Hirasing Gurung
Naik Embahadur Thapa
Rfn. Narbahadur Thapa
Hav. Goberdhan Gurung
Coy. Hav.-Major Chitrabahadur Thapa
Naik Jagbir Thapa
L./Hav. Puranbahadur Thapa
Rfn. Maitasing Tamang
Naik Tilakbahadur Rai*4th Battalion*Hav. Gampha Gurung
Naik Jagbahadur Gurung
Naik Simbahadur Gurung
Naik Kishanbahadur Newar, M.M.
Hav. Hushiarsing Karki
Naik Sombahadur Rai
Hav. Dhankaji Gurung*Regimental Centre*

Jem. Babarjang Gurung 153 (Gurkha) Para. Bn.

*M.M.**1st Battalion*Naik Narbahadur Thapa
Rfn. Kharke Thapa
Rfn. Tekbahadur Ghale
Rfn. Chakrabahdur Pun

2nd Battalion

Naik Chheosing Gurung

3rd Battalion

Rfn. Narjang Gurung
 Hav. Tulbahadur Gurung (Later Jemadar)
 Rfn. Padamlal Rai
 Rfn. Jangbir Bura
 Rfn. Tikaram Rana
 Rfn. Panchabahadur Rai
 L./Naik Ranbahadur Thapa
 L./Naik Jasbahadur Rai
 Naik Tilakbahadur Thapa
 L./Hav. Dilbahadur Rana
 L./Naik Chandre Thapa
 Rfn. Sherbahadur Rana
 Hav. Dhandraj Gurung
 Naik Govinde Newar
 L./Naik Judhbir Gurung
 Naik Mane Thapa

4th Battalion

L./Hav. Purbasing Rana
 Rfn. Narbahadur Khatri
 Rfn. Bishanbahadur Thapa
 Naik Aibar Pun
 Rfn. Manbahadur Thapa
 L./Naik Jiblal Newar
 Hav. Bhagatbir Gurung
 Naik Hira Gurung Also Bar
 Naik Kishanbahadur Newar
 Naik Jaslal Rana
 Rfn. Bhimbahadur Khatri
 Naik Mangle Gurung
 Rfn. Dhanbahadur Thapa
 Rfn. Padamsing Mall
 Rfn. Asardhan Rai
 L./Naik Dhanbahadur Gurung
 Rfn. Birbahadur Gurung
 L./Naik Udaibahadur Gurung
 Rfn. Dilbahadur Tamang
 Rfn. Dhanman Gurung
 L./Naik Dilbahadur Thapa
 Hav. Bishansing Pun
 Naik Ganjman Thapa
 Rfn. Purne Pun
 L./Naik Baliram Gharti
 Hav. Ranbahadur Gurung
 Rfn. Lalbahadur Thapa
 L./Naik Debbahadur Thapa

*MENTIONS IN DESPACHES**1st Battalion*

Lt.-Col. C. E. Jarvis
 Major L. J. G. Showers With 2 G.R.
 Major H. R. E. Willis Tochi Scouts
 Major R. W. Clark
 Major V. O. Roberts
 Major J. C. G. Rennie

8 G.Os. and 4 G.O.Rs.

2nd Battalion

Lt.-Col. J. O. Fulton
 Major E. T. D. Ryder Staff
 Major W. J. Winkfield
 Major J. E. Heelis Force 136
 Capt. N. P. G. O'Neal
 2/Lieut. E. Palfery

1 G.O. and 7 G.O.Rs.

3rd Battalion

Lt.-Col. C. M. H. Wingfield, D.S.O.,
 M.V.O.
 Lt.-Col. G. H. W. Bond
 Lt.-Col. E. N. Jameson, O.B.E. .. Indian Pioneer Corps
 Major C. U. Blascheck, M.C.
 Major C. M. Dodkins, D.S.O.
 Capt. A. I. Jack
 Lieut. J. Twells
 Lieut. W. H. Harrison
 Lieut. D. M. Plenderlieth
 Capt. B. W. Sutherland
 Capt. A. H. Webb

16 G.Os. and 21 G.O.Rs.

4th Battalion

Lt.-Col. N. M. Macleod N.W.F., 1942
 Lt.-Col. C. H. D. Berthon
 Lt.-Col. D. G. T. Horsford, D.S.O.
 Major J. P. Thompson
 Major P. F. H. Reeve
 Major Sir C. J. Nixon, Bart., M.C.
 Capt. N. Choudhuri, I.A.M.C. .. Attached Medical Officer
 Major C. D. Nixon, M.C.
 Major G. P. Careless
 Major H. W. Clark
 Lieut. C. S. Rae
 Lt.-Col. S. W. Templeman Staff

12 G.Os. and 27 G.O.Rs.

Nepalese Decoration: Gajindra Mokshia

Lt.-Col. S. R. Macdonald

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